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THE WORK

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT

IN CONVERSION,

CONSIDERED

IN ITS RELATION TO THE CONDITION OF MAN AND THE WAYS OF GOD:

WITH

PRACTICAL ADDRESSES TO A SINNER,

ON THE PRINCIPLES MAINTAINED.

BY

JOHN HOWARD HINTON, A. M.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND ADDITIONS,

BY

ISAAC TAYLOR HINTON.

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PREFACE.

THE controversies which at present exist respecting the operations of the Holy Spirit, and the frequently recurring demand for a work on this subject, prevent the necessity of offering any apology for the re-printing of the volume now presented to the public.

The original design of the work, was to evince the consistency of the Spirit's influence in conversion with the free agency of man and the responsibility of the sinner; —to show not only the necessity of those influences, but the ground of that necessity. The position endeavored to be elucidated and sustained throughout the following pages, is, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are bestowed to induce a holy disposition, and the consequent right employment of faculties already existing, and not to communicate capacity. Whether this view is not of high importance, and whether or not it is successfully maintained, the reader will of course judge for himself.

The absolute necessity of the operation of the Spirit in conversion, was expressly maintained in the work in its original form; but the circumstances of its publication in

England did not call for any extended argument on that portion of the subject. On this point the author observes, "The subject of this volume is not the *whole* work of the Spirit, but simply that work *in the conversion of a sinner;* and this only *in its relation to the condition of man, and the ways of God.* The recollection of this may tend to prevent dissatisfaction that I have not asserted the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit; that I have not expatiated on the whole of his glorious work; and that I have not even entered into any detailed account of conversion itself. Upon all these points I believe I am truly 'orthodox.'"

In the present case, however, the extensive denial of the existence of any personal influence of the Spirit in conversion, rendered it necessary to enter more at length into the proof of that fundamental doctrine. No one can regret more than the writer, that this portion of the work should not have fallen into abler hands; but he rejoices in the assurance that the feebleness of the advocate will serve only to render more apparent the strength of the truth.

It is but just to the author of the work, that the editor holds himself responsible for the Introduction, and for the first eight chapters of Part I, except such paragraphs as are thus marked [ ].

It is hoped these pages may, by the blessing of God have some tendency to check the progress of error on the right hand and on the left. "The subject itself," observes the author, "is one of infinite excellency, and one upon

which nothing can be wisely and seriously written, without being, under the divine blessing, conducive to good. Nothing can be more important than to have right views of the Holy Spirit's work, and few things more necessary than to lead persons generally to a habit of vigorous and scriptural thought respecting it. I earnestly entreat those who peruse them, to read, not with the view of criticising the writer, or estimating his success as a controversialist, but with a desire to become thereby both wiser and better. That what I write may be adapted to this end, may God in mercy grant me the teachings of that blessed Spirit, of whose work I am about to treat! Whereinsoever I may err, either in sentiment or in spirit, may He graciously forgive! And the effort itself, with all its feebleness and imperfection, may he condescendingly own and accept, as a tribute from a grateful heart to the glory of his name, and as an instrument offered by a willing hand to the promotion of his cause."

That this effort *has* received the abundant blessing of God, the editor has, from his own knowledge, a most pleasing assurance: that the labors of his beloved relative may become more extensively useful than he had entertained any conception of, is the object alike of these co-operating exertions, and of his humble but fervent prayers.

P. S. It is possible, that from the similarity existing between some of the sentiments, and even, perhaps, in a few instances, the expressions, contained in this volume,

and those of some eminent American theologians of the present day, it may be surmised, (as indeed it has already been by one of the ablest of our periodical journals,) that the former resulted from a perusal of the writings of the latter. Justice demands that the editor should state that he can vouch for the fact from his own knowledge, that at the period when Mr. Hinton wrote this work, (in 1829,) he was not conversant with the writings of American theologians of a later date than those of the justly celebrated Edwards. Whatever opinion may be formed of the following pages, they are the result of an independent mind, taking the sacred scriptures as the *only* and the *sufficient* rule of faith and practice.

RICHMOND, MAY 28, 1834.

THE WORK

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT

IN CONVERSION.

INTRODUCTION.

OF THE PERSONALITY, DIVINITY, AND GENERAL OPERATIONS OF THE SPIRIT.

CHAP. I.

Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

OF the truths made known to us in Revelation, none are *contrary* to the right exercise of human reason; many of them, however, are above its comprehension: but this is equally the case in the book of nature; and the man who denies the authority of Sacred Writ, is no more free from the necessity of believing in the existence of facts the *modus* of which he does not comprehend, than the most devout believer in Christianity. Those who refuse to receive the plain testimony of Scripture, therefore, on the subject of the nature and character of the Deity, because they do not understand *how* such things can be, are so far from being justified in appropriating to

themselves the epithet "rational," that they stand self-convicted of adopting a course of reasoning respecting the Deity, the very reverse of that of which they are conscious respecting themselves. This is true, at least of all those who admit the existence of the soul as an immaterial principle distinct from the body; for who can apprehend the *mode* by which spirit acts upon matter, or in other words, how such a being as he finds himself to be can exist?—If any of our readers should hesitate, then, to receive the testimony of Scripture concerning the Spirit of God, at least let him reflect that Revelation asks no greater stretch of his faith respecting the Deity, than his own consciousness demands and obtains from him respecting himself. Far from being contrary to what might reasonably be expected, the mystery which inspiration has suffered to remain on the subject of the Divine Nature, is perfectly analogous to that which pertains to *all* essences. The partial knowledge of the ancients led them to believe in the doctrine of four *elementary* substances; the more diligent and intelligent researches of modern science, have left it a *mystery* whether any elementary or simple substance exists. With so little knowledge as to the essential nature either of matter or of mind, it is as unphilosophical as it is irreverent to disbelieve the facts stated by the Deity respecting his own being, because the method of their co-existence is beyond the limits of our comprehension.

Retaining these general principles in our view, we shall take a brief glance, as introductory to the

main design of this volume, at the Scripture testimony respecting both the PERSONALITY and DIVINITY of the SPIRIT of GOD.

In making use of the term PERSONALITY, we by no means intend to affirm that it either embraces all the ideas characteristic of, or excludes all ideas foreign from, the subject to which it is applied; still less do we adopt it as in itself authoritative, or from an overweening respect to ancient phraseology; but because we can find no one word so well adapted to concentrate our views on this subject. We will take this opportunity to state, what we trust will be apparent through the course of our work, that while we would avoid adopting either terms or ideas solely because they have been honored with the testimony of time and of eminent men, we would be equally remote from the childish vanity of using new expressions while those for ages in common use are far more correctly descriptive of truth, than any that have subsequently been invented by minds more characterized by vivacity of conception, than by profundity of thought.

1. That the Holy Spirit has personality, and is not merely an attribute descriptive of the power of God, must be inferred from the very title by which he is designated. Our Lord promised his disciples that he would "pray the Father and he should give them another Comforter." John xiv. 16, 17. And again, "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, *he* shall teach you." ver. 26.; the personal pronoun being used, as in the following passages: "*he* shall tes-

tify of me;" when "*he* cometh, he shall not speak of himself;" "*he* shall glorify me." John xvi. 7—15. It has been suggested, however, that it is a common *poetical license* among the inspired writers to *personify* the power of the Deity; and to some extent this is true, but not in the gospels; the writings of John and the other evangelists do not partake of this character. If this should be further pressed, the objector will find himself silenced by the mode of expression adopted by Paul in Romans xv. 13—19. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem, and round about, unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Those who maintain that by the phrase, the Spirit of God, is designated only the power of God, are compelled for the sake of consistency, to translate these phrases "by the power of the power of God:" which is attributing a style of writing to the inspired penmen which it would disgrace the most incompetent of their uninspired opponents to be guilty of. Other passages of similar import might be adduced; but to the candid enquirer they are unnecessary, and to any other they would be useless.

2. The Spirit of God is evidently a *person*, from the characteristics attributed to him. We have already seen that power has been attributed to the Holy Spirit; so also are grace, Heb. x. 29; truth,

John xiv. 17; goodness, Heb. ix. 20, Psalm cxliii. 10; glory, 1 Pet. iv. 14; holiness, throughout the New Testament. Now *attributes* must be associated with some *person*, not with another attribute; thus, for instance, we attribute goodness to God, and power to God: but we cannot attribute goodness to *power*, any more than power to *goodness*.

3. That the Spirit of God has personality, is manifest from the acts said to be performed *by* him.—All the internal acts of mind are allotted to him, He is said to *know*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11; to be *pleased*, Acts xv. 28; to be *vexed*, Isa. lxiii. 10; and to be *provoked* and *grieved*.—The transitive acts are also attributed to the Spirit of God equally with the reflective. He is declared to *speak*, John xvi. 13; Rev. ii. 7, and xxii. 17; Acts viii. 20, and x. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 1; to *lead*, Rom. viii. 14; to *be a witness*, Rom. viii. 16; to *bestow gifts*, 1 Cor. xii. 8—10; to *work miracles*, Rom. xv. 19; to *sanctify*, 1 Cor. ii. 11; but above all, to *intercede*, Rom. viii. 26. If any one who doubts the personality of the Spirit, will now allow himself to enquire, "*Had it been* designed to represent the Spirit as a divine person, how would he have been spoken of?" we apprehend his scepticism on this point will find a satisfactory and speedy termination. But let us notice—

4. In proof of the personality of the Spirit derived from acts said to be done *against* him, we might mention several passages; but we shall quote only one, because we deem that *decisive;* indeed, capable *alone* of sustaining both the personality and the

divinity of the Holy Spirit, without adding any other argument whatever. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matt. xiii. 31 & 32.) No person who has any regard for common sense, will maintain that our Lord designed to state that all blasphemies should be forgiven, except those against the *power* of God; and viewing the Spirit as representing any other attribute of God, it is equally absurd to represent our Lord as saying that all blasphemies against the whole character of God should be forgiven, but that the blasphemy against *one* of his attributes, descriptive of a portion of his character, should never be forgiven. There is no alternative but admitting the *personality* of the Holy Spirit.

Other arguments might be adduced; but as the limits of this introduction do not admit of them, neither does the nature of the subject stand in need of them. We shall proceed, therefore, to notice

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit. On this subject there has been but little controversy in modern times. The idea that the term, "the Holy Spirit," alluded to Michael the Archangel, or some other created spirit, has been rarely held, and still more rarely propagated. It is only, therefore, necessary to men-

tion that both the names and the attributes of God are allotted to the Holy Spirit, in the sacred records. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." (Acts v. 3 & 4.) "Now, the Lord is that Spirit." The moral attributes of Deity, as holiness, truth, &c., have already been proved to be attributes to the Holy Spirit, and the natural attributes are not withheld from him. For instance, Eternity:—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 14.) Omniscience:—"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 10.) And Omnipresence:—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (Psalm cxxxix. 7.)

CHAP. II

Of the Influences of the Spirit on Matter, Intellect, and Disposition.

The analogical method of reasoning is, perhaps, at once the earliest and the safest to which the human mind has recurrence. It is true it has been abused; but it is also true, that more practical good has been effected by it than by any other process.—We design to make use of it in this chapter, in a manner, the correctness of which can be objected to by no candid opponent.—*If the action of the Spirit on matter, intellect, and disposition,* in all other cases but that of conversion, *be personal and effectual; then, by a just and inevitable analogy, the work of the Spirit in conversion must also be personal and effectual.*

1. In contemplating the *operations of the Holy Spirit on matter,* it is peculiarly interesting to observe, that his agency in its formation is affirmed by the inspired historian in the very commencement of his narration, "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. i. 2.) The same writer, in his unrivalled biography of the most patient of men, also assures us, that "by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." (Job xxvi. 13.) It was undeniably the same almighty agent, which was employed in effecting the various miracles, no less lovely in their manifestation of benevolence,

than magnificent in their exhibition of power, which were wrought by our Lord and his apostles; for, when these glorious effects had been attributed by the malignity of the pharisees to demoniacal influence, our Lord charged them with blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; in which allegation there could be no possible propriety, unless the miracles thus attributed to Satan were the work of the Spirit.—While on this point, we would urge on the minds of our readers, *how nearly* the sin of claiming that on which everlasting life and glory are made to depend, as the act of our own minds, unaided by any personal or effectual influence of the Spirit of God, may approximate both in its necessary influence on the heart, and in provoking the just displeasure of God, to that of the Jews who attributed his agency on matter to Satan. The difference is only this—they attributed his glorious operations to an *evil spirit* —the upholders of this doctrine to *evil men.* I will not say the Holy Spirit is *equally,* but he is *immeasurably* dishonored in both; and the danger is too great not to make every thinking mind, much more every sincere christian, consider most deliberately and solemnly before he adopts sentiments which may, by any possibility, lead him to the commission, or even lay him open to the imputation, of such a spiritual atrocity.

It is presumed that none will attempt to maintain that efficacy existed in the clay which our Lord laid on the eyes of the blind man; surely in this case the agency of the Spirit was equally *personal* as in

that of the resurrection of Lazarus, when the voice of our Lord summoned him to life. We beg it may not be imagined that we uphold the sentiment that the word of God is no more *adapted* to convert the sinner, than clay is to restore the sight; the reverse will be made apparent in the latter portion of this volume. We are not *now* speaking of the nature of the Spirit's influence in conversion, or even of its necessity; but only to this point, that the employment of means, in the case alluded to, in no way obscures the personality or efficiency of the action of the Spirit.

2. *The influences of the Holy Spirit on the human intellect* are no less wonderful in their character, and more interesting in their results, than those we have already been contemplating. These influences are evident in the communication to the mind of facts the knowledge of which had been lost, as well as in the revelation of those which, through a long series of ages, were yet to come; in the instructing the minds of the inspired teachers, both of the old and new dispensations in the truths of God; in imparting the capability of speaking in languages of which the individuals thus inspired had previously been entirely ignorant; and in various other methods which our present purpose will not permit to be entered upon. In some cases, the *form* in which these communications respecting the past or future history of the world was communicated, is not stated; and where this is the case, to attempt to supply it by conjecture is, perhaps, both irreverent and vain.—

The prophetic intimations were chiefly given by the medium of visions impressed by the Spirit on the imaginative faculty, sometimes while the body was asleep, and other times in its waking hours. These visions, however, were generally followed by explanations conducted either with an audible voice, or by an intellectual process of which we are ignorant, but which produced the same results.

The *gift of tongues* is, perhaps, though not the most important, yet the most striking of all the operations of the Spirit on the intellect of man. Far from consisting in the uttering of a few syllables or words in forms of sound never before heard of, as now practised under the sanction of some excellent, but most unhappily deluded men, the gift of tongues was a miracle which enabled its possessor to make full use of the whole range of a language or languages well known to thousands or millions in the vicinity of the abode of the favored minister of the gospel. *How* the human mind can be capable of such an instantaneous acquisition of knowledge, of such a character and extent, is indeed a mystery; but the fact is on that account neither less true, nor its existence less credible.

The last kind of operation of the Spirit on intellect which it will be needful at this time to notice, is that of his *teaching truth*. This portion of his work, if less brilliant, is far more important than the former, since upon it the reliance of the church in all ages for the divine and infallible character of the doctrines

taught in the word of God has rested, and must of necessity rest; and in a degree proportioned to its importance has the testimony concerning it been made plain. Our Lord, after informing his disciples that there were many things which they were at present unprepared to hear and learn, assured them that he would send them the Holy Ghost, which should "teach" them "all things," (John xvi. 26.) and should "guide" them "into all truth," (ch. xvi. 13.) To this operation of the Spirit of God we would invite particular attention. In all cases in which these promises were fulfilled, it is evident that the human mind has been instructed in truth without the agency of any written or oral communication. The apostles could not have been instructed by the forms of truth, which they, for the first time, developed; they must have been taught these truths *directly* by the Spirit. The position, therefore, which has been assumed by some, that the influence of the Spirit on the human mind in conversion, as distinct from the word, however acting in conjunction with it, is not to be believed, *because the method of it cannot be understood*, must be abandoned, or the inspiration of the New Testament must be given up; since if the influence of the Spirit contended for is denied, because the method of its operation is not understood, on the same principle the divine character of the truths the apostles taught may as truly cease to be acknowledged, because the method of their acquirement cannot be apprehended. The melancholy history of error, fully attests the correctness of this as-

sertion; how many who have commenced only with denying the necessity of the influence of the Spirit on their own hearts, have terminated in denying the inspiration of the epistles, and in regarding the gospels as the production of illiterate and ignorant men!

3. That class of operations of the Spirit the most interesting in its nature, and far the most momentous and glorious in its results, now remains to be noticed—*that exertion of his power which affects the disposition, and consequently the moral character of man.* It cannot fail to be perceived in the operations on matter and intellect, that, whatever may have been the *instrumentality employed*, the Holy Spirit was the *direct agent* in these operations. Whether a man break a stone with the blow of a hammer, or melt gold by the power of fire, he is in either case equally the *agent* who accomplishes these results, however different or even opposite the character of the instrumentality. The harmony of truth requires the same view with respect to the operations of the Spirit; the work of the Spirit on matter and intellect has been seen to be personal and effectual—that on the disposition must be so also. To believe the former and not the latter, would be to assert that the material part of humanity was more susceptible of the operation of Spirit than the spiritual; which must manifestly in its own nature possess a much greater adaptation to spiritual influence, than the material part of the human system. It is true we have no idea of the *method* by which spirit operates directly upon spirit; neither have we of the method by which

spirit operates upon matter—as in the case of raising the arm of the body in obedience to the volition of the mind: nor indeed of the method in which spirit is operated upon by the expression of thought or sentiment. It can no more be developed *how* the oral or written expression of truth operates upon the mind than how spirit operates upon spirit without such expression. All that can be affirmed in either case is, that the human mind is so constituted as to admit of such operations; and the proof in either case is to be derived not from the demonstration of the mode, but from evidence of the *fact*. We maintain that both facts exist, and that the evidence of the latter is as clear and satisfactory as that of the former.

It is by no means, however, our design to affirm, that the word of truth, in its oral or written form, is not the instrument *ordinarily employed* by the Spirit in his operations on the human mind; far less, that he ever communicates to the mind *any other truths* than are therein revealed: such an idea is the basis of all fanaticism; and it is tantamount to a declaration that the divine word is incomplete, and inadequate to the purposes for which it was designed. Were it to be admitted indeed, that the sacred scriptures are the instrumentality *always* employed, still the personal and effectual agency of the Spirit *wherever* spiritually good results are produced, is clearly necessary; but we are prepared to maintain that to *limit* the operations of the Spirit of God on the heart to the *oral or written forms* of truth, is both contrary to the *nature* of spiritual existence, to the *analogy* of the

influence exercised by human minds on each other, to the *experience* of Christians in all ages, and to the *testimony and examples* of sacred writ.—The presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, separately from the scriptures, is of more vital consequence than many are apt to perceive. The *truth* can only be justly said to be present with us, when we are "in remembrance" of it; is there any Christian who will be willing to limit the *indwellings of the Spirit* spoken of in the text even to his believing the word whenever presented to the mind? But if the Spirit of God be in the heart *when* the word is not present to the memory, then the *distinctive* possession and operation of the Spirit is clearly proved. Even, however, were it admitted that the Spirit of God was never present with, or acting on, the mind, when the word oral or written was not, whatever other valuable doctrines might be affected, that of the personal and direct agency of the Spirit would remain untouched. The circumstance of the instrumentality employed by the Spirit in his operations on the disposition being apparent, so far from diminishing the evidence of the Spirit being the agent, manifestly confirms the fact; the "sword of the Spirit" is not only *made* by him, but *exercised* by him also.

The operations of the Spirit on the disposition are indeed of a variety commensurate with the diversified states of feeling of which the human mind is capable; they may, however, be summarily comprehended by the terms *regeneration* and *sanctification*; or the production of repentance, faith, and obedience·

As several subsequent sections will be devoted to the consideration and the proof of the influences of the Spirit in regeneration, we shall only here refer to some of those passages of sacred writ, which assert them to be the agency by which sanctification of heart and life are also produced. Before quoting them we cannot help observing that the very title bestowed on the Spirit is descriptive of his agency in this blessed work. If conquerors have received their titles from the most celebrated of their achievements, the triumphs of the Almighty conqueror of depravity in the human heart, have added to the glory of his name, and he is not only the Holy Spirit, but *the Spirit of Holiness*, Rom. i., 4. Let us to the law and to the testimony: —"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Holy Spirit, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."—Rom. viii. 13—15. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor. iii. 17. "For we, through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith:" Gal. v. 5.—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,

peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," verse 22.—"We both have access by one Spirit to the Father," Eph. ii. 18.—"In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," verse 22.—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," Eph. vi. 18.—"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spitit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13.—"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 2.—"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, verse 22.—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16.—"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.—"What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1 Cor. vi. 19.—"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. iii. 3.—"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost," Acts xiii. 52.—"In the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts ix. 20.—"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5.—"For our gospel came not unto you in

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," 1 Thess. i. 5.—"Praying in the Holy Ghost," Jude 20.

The foregoing is but a selection from the abundance of testimony with which the word of God teems, to the fact, that the Holy Spirit is the great agent in the sanctification of men. There are but two ways to evade the force of these passages—to limit their application to an age of miracles, or to affirm that they are metaphorical, and that *literally* the *word* is the sole agent in producing all these results. Is it possible that any man, having read these passages, can put such a construction upon them, and yet ask to be regarded as one "born of the Spirit?" That attempts to maintain these positions have been made, the history of the past and of the present alike testify. How widely and how currently such notions as that the word is the Spirit—or that it is inseparably connected with it—or invariably accompanied by it—that the Spirit influences us by the word only as we may each other by a letter; or that the Spirit is in the word as a man's spirit is in his writings—have been circulated, if the writer can form but an imperfect, it is yet a lamentable estimate. To any who may have received such ideas he would suggest the question, by what agency do they expect the resurrection of their bodies will be effected? It is expressly asserted, (Rom. viii. 11.) that "he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" If therefore, this Spirit be the

word—it is the Bible which is to effect their resurrection! It is presumed, that persons entertaining this notion will be careful to give directions that a Bible should be enclosed in their coffins.

PART I.

OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION.

CHAP. I.

The necessity of the work of the Spirit in conversion;—The argument from the universality of human depravity.

[The operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of a sinner is not to be regarded as occasional or accidental, but as essential and uniform. Conversion to God never has taken place, and never will take place, without it. And if this be the case, it is but saying the same thing in other words, to assert that his influence is *absolutely necessary* to the production of this effect.]

This invariable necessity is rendered evident by the homogeneousness and universality of the depravity of the heart. We shall not now discuss the *nature* of that depravity; we trust that will be made apparent in a subsequent section of this volume. It is now a question of extent and equality not of nature. But if it be admitted that this depravity was only an indisposition to comply either with the commands of the law, or the invitations of the Gospel—still it is *total* and *universal*. The whole tenor of Scripture asserts or assumes this. Let us refer

to the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, there we find the following phraseology:—"Dead in trespasses and sins," (verse 1.) "Among whom we all had our conversation in times past, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," (ver. 3,) "But God, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (verse 5.) Now to whatever subject the figure of death may be held to refer either *totality* and *equality* are intended, or a figure highly calculated to mislead is made use of. A man cannot be more or less dead; the very idea is absurd: he must be either dead or alive. All dead persons are totally dead, and equally dead: but men are dead in trespasses and sins; therefore, whatever that death be, they are totally dead, equally dead. But that death all admit refers to depravity of heart, therefore sinners are totally depraved, equally depraved: "*all*," "*even as others.*" If the language of this section of Scripture be not plain and decisive on this point, no language can be.

Decisive, however, as are these passages as to the extent and equality of human depravity, they are abundantly sustained by the most express assertions of the fact throughout the sacred volume. David not only tuned his mournful lays to deplore the corruption of his own heart, as in the 51st Psalm, but also expressly asserts such corruption to be universal:—"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside

they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm xiv. 2 & 3.)

When the evangelical prophet is speaking of the grand expiatory sacrifice, he expressly intimates that the whole human race had fallen into one common state of transgression, the penalty due to which was sustained by one common Saviour. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 6.) If, as is more than insinuated by some, who, in spite of our Saviour's awful warning, will still speak against the Spirit, the depravity of men so essentially differs as to furnish the solution of the fact that some believe, while others remain finally impenitent: surely the conduct resulting from such diverse, not to say contrary, states of mind, must be of too opposite a character to be included under the phraseology, "all we, like sheep, have gone astray" or "they are altogether become filthy," or "children of wrath, even as others."

The views and experience of Paul perfectly corresponded with those of David and Isaiah. "For I know," says Paul to the Romans, (ch. vii. ver. 18,) "that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Now repentance and faith are spiritual actions commanded by God; therefore they must be admitted to be good, and consequently they do not dwell in the flesh. To be "in the flesh," is to be without the Spirit. The expression is used for exactly this purpose by Paul throughout the next chap-

ter. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.—So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' (Rom. viii. 1, 5, 8, 9.) *Are repentance and faith pleasing to God?* Certainly—*for he has commanded them:* then THEY ARE NEVER DONE BY THOSE IN THE FLESH. "So they that are in the flesh cannot please God." But those who are not in the flesh are in the Spirit; "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit:" and those who are in the Spirit have the Spirit in them; "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." The case, therefore, stands as clear as the sun in its meridian glory. Those only who have the "Spirit dwelling" in them, are "in the Spirit:" those only who are in the Spirit do any thing to "please God:" repentance and faith do "please God;" therefore, *repentance and faith are performed only by those who have the Spirit dwelling in them.* Can any man ask to be acknowledged as a Christian, *who owns that his repentance and faith did* NOT *result from the indwelling of the Spirit of God?*

CHAP II.

The Influence of the Holy Spirit in Conversion maintained—from the express connection of Conversion with Divine Predetermination.

The doctrine of the Divine predeterminations has been much misapprehended and equally misrepresented. No truth can be more apparent, and none more consistent with right reason. Indeed it is absolutely essential to just ideas of Deity—or otherwise we deny to the Eternal either the possession or the exercise of attributes which we find developed by ourselves every day, and which consequently we must have derived from our Creator. Is it too much to ask that we allow to God the same capacity of predetermining *his* conduct, which we continually exercise over our own? And while we, in all other points, form an idea of the Deity, as the supreme intelligence, by attributing to him, at least all the intellectual capacities we find ourselves in possession of, and then superadding to them the qualities of perfection and infinitude; shall we destroy the harmony of our ideas respecting the divine character by adopting a contrary method on this subject? Let it be clearly understood, then, that what we maintain is, *that the Divine Being, like all other intelligent agents, predetermines his own actions to the full extent of his foreknowledge.*

Many of the advocates of the doctrine of predestination have done it signal injustice in upholding it as something special to the plan of human redemption: whereas, in the exercise of this attribute in the proceedings of his grace, he has acted in entire uniformity with all his creative and providential dealings; and inconsistency and absurdity lie not to our charge, but at the door of those, who, while they admit the divine Being to *predetermine* the creation of a world, or subversion of an empire, shudder to make the same admission respecting the most glorious manifestation alike of his benevolence and his power in the conversion of a soul. The salvation of men is the highest glory of their Creator; to procure it, the Lord of life and glory laid aside his heavenly state—dwelt in a tenement of clay—suffered an ignominious death—endured inconceivable agony of soul—rose from the dead—ascended to the right hand of his Father—intercedes for his saints—prepares mansions of glory for them—and comes again to summon them to their abodes of bliss. Is here no forethought? and is the single circumstance of the inducing some to partake of this banquet of love to be excepted from the general rule? Did our Lord die *only* to *afford opportunity* for the salvation of sinners? or was it not also *actually to "bring many sons unto glory."*

It is unnecessary, however, to our present object, to enter generally into the defence of this glorious doctrine. No mind that can divest itself for a moment of the shackles of prejudice, can fail to admit

that whatever God *does*, that he *predetermined* to do; and this is all that is needful to our present purpose. That position being admitted, the converse of it cannot possibly be denied. If what God does, that he has previously determined to do, then what he predetermines to do, that he does. I am aware there are cases of evil, where God is figuratively said to do, that which he *permits* to be done; but the case about to be adduced, manifestly cannot be thus disposed of; the transaction is one in which no reason exists, why the connection of the Deity with it should be changed into a permissive character only; on the contrary, the act in question is one which God promises to do, "I will put a right spirit in you," &c. and one which he claims to himself, "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." It is asserted, (Acts xiii. 48) that "as many as were ordained (τεταγμενοι) to eternal life believed." The believing on which eternal life depends, must manifestly be included in the ordination, that assures eternal life itself. This is apparent from the construction of the sentence. It is not said, "and as many as believed were ordained to eternal life;" in that case, indeed, the ordination to eternal life, might be said to be the consequence of believing; but I may appeal to every candid person who understands the principles common to all languages, whether the construction used by the inspired writer, does not inevitably involve the idea that the believing here spoken of resulted from the fact of the individual's being ordained, and not the ordination

from the fact of believing. If this be the case, as undoubtedly it is, the only method by which the being "ordained" of God, can rationally be connected with "believing;" is the predetermination of God to induce faith in the minds of the persons spoken of. This believing is a good work in the heart of man. and the *agency* which God employs to effect good operations in the heart of man is the Holy Spirit.—No one questions that if faith be personally effected in the heart by God, that his Spirit is the agent; the whole question (and it is a vital one) is, whether the act of believing be effected by God at all, or whether he only furnishes the "fact," and the "testimony" which are believed.

I am aware that this passage has been found to press so heavily on more errors than one, that a desperate effort has been made to evade its force by asserting that the Greek word rendered "ordained," *may be* rendered "disposed" or "inclined." I shall cut this matter short by denying it in the most unqualified manner: and by challenging any individual to bring a single instance from any writer, sacred or profane, in which the word τεταγμενοι, or any of the derivates of the verb τασσω are ever used in the sense of *inclined:* till then I must indulge a painful regret, that any theologian should so far become blinded to what is due to honesty itself, as to make such an assertion.

This sentiment is abundantly corroborated by other portions of sacred writ. In the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we have it express-

ly stated, that those whom he called he purposed to call; and those whom he predetermined to call, he did actually call; which is precisely the position we have maintained above. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." (Rom. viii. 28—31.) The language of the same apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians, is equally indisputable: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" (Eph. 4, 5, 11.) "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.)

It is to us one of the most pleasing results of the views stated in the subsequent pages, that we can enjoy most unreservedly the highly consolatory and invigorating doctrines sustained by these passages, without in the slightest degree interfering with the basis on which the most pungent appeals to sinners firmly rest—the capacity they possess and the opportunity afforded them to repent and believe: and so

far from there being even the shadow of a discrepancy, or the appearance of any difficulty, these views accord with a harmony as refreshing to the soul, as it is assuring of their truth.

CHAP III.

The work of the Holy Spirit in conversion;—The argument from its acknowledged influence in sanctification.

The operations of the Holy Spirit on disposition generally, have already been made the subject of consideration in our introductory remarks. It has been shewn that the presence of the influence of the Spirit of God in connexion with, and yet distinct from the truth, is so far from being contrary to the analogy of the action of human minds on each other, that it is in most direct and even exact accordance. Who has not felt that the humble attitude and suppliant eye has a powerful influence to persuade, distinct from, though connected with, the facts presented; or that proud and haughty demeanor induce the refusal of a request which would otherwise have been cheerfully granted. If spirit, when clogged with mortal clay, has such methods of access to its fellow spirit, who will be found bold enough to deny that methods equally silent, rational, and efficacious, are possessed by that Spirit which

breathed into us the living soul? We shall assume it to be admitted, therefore, that the Spirit of God has direct access to the human mind: and we deem it equally proved from the mass of Scripture testimony presented in our introductory section, that the Spirit avails himself of that access to the mind of the believer in carrying on the work of his sanctification through the truth. It is a matter of much satisfaction that we feel assured that this truth is still retained by many of those who are under what we pray God may prove only a temporary delusion respecting the absence of similar influences in the work of conversion. To the attention of such, we would present this plain enquiry:—*Does not the admission of the personal and efficacious influence of the Spirit in sanctification inevitably involve their presence in conversion also?* We feel assured that no candid enquirer will ever be left to give a negative to this question, but will be led to perceive both the absurdity and impiety of such a denial.

Let us suppose some one individual might be found either so intoxicated with the idea, to him so novel, that he is attempting to think for himself, or fascinated with honour of the personal acquaintance of some unrivalled resurrectionist of "ancient" errors, or bewildered by the sickly rays of the orb whose monthly shinings vainly strive to compensate the soul for its forsaking the pure light of the sun of righteousness;—let us suppose some one infatuated individual could be found to maintain that the personal influence and indwelling of the Spirit are

given, and therefore are necessary, to produce "love" and "joy," expressly asserted to be the "fruits of the Spirit," but are not necessary, and therefore not afforded, to produce repentance and faith. Now either the influences of the Spirit are *necessary* to produce love and joy, or they are not; if they are not necessary, then God bestows a superfluous gift, which will be maintained by none; if they are necessary, then, in a spiritual sense, *love and joy never exist without them.* But the advocates of this view maintain, that repentance and faith *do exist* without such influences; and therefore that *repentance and faith do exist without love and joy.* True *repentance* existing without *love* towards the Being whom we repent having offended; and *faith* in an Almighty Saviour—a faith having, by his express declaration, eternal life attached to its possession—actually possessed without one principle of *joy!* If this be not an absurdity, in what region is one to be found?

But the *impiety* of this error exceeds its *absurdity.* It represents the *Holy Ghost* condescending to *carry on* the work which *man* has *commenced:* it allots to man the more difficult, and therefore the more glorious part, and to God the inferior, both in point of effort and of glory. It exhibits to us, man reflecting on his past conduct, taking just views of his relation and duty to God, expressing sincere sorrow for his ingratitude and rebellion, turning from his sins and the world to God, exercising faith in the Lord Jesus, willing to obey him at the risk of all his earthly prospects, and even of life itself; and all this with-

out reference (in the words of one of the advocates of this soul-damning error,) to "that fatal and *immoral* maxim of popular theology, that special spiritual operations are necessary to faith."* Yes, this state of mind and conduct without the Spirit!—"The Holy Spirit is *not* given to men to make them believe and obey the gospel; but rather *because* they *have* believed and obeyed the gospel."† Thus the "seeking first the kingdom of God;" the "agonizing to enter in the strait gate;" the "cutting off the right arm;" and the "plucking out the right eye," are the *cause*, not the *consequence*, of the influences of the Spirit being bestowed.‡

"* The Holy Spirit; a Discourse;" as re-published in the Evangelist, Feb. 1833, (p. 30.)

† Ibid. p. 26.

‡ It is a circumstance of a character as extraordinary as it is disreputable to the parties whom it concerns, that many of those who countenance and support the individuals who maintain and preach that "there is no personal influence of the Spirit previous to baptism," continue to deny that such doctrines are promulgated by the individuals alluded to. Whether intentionally or not, there must be great deception practised, and great delusion produced by this course. Either the personal influences of the Spirit are necessary to induce repentance and faith, or they are not: if they are, of course no person can be saved without repentance and faith produced by them. How any individuals, who believe that these influences *are* necessary, can by their presence, countenance, and fellowship, support those who deny this essential doctrine, must be matter alike of grief and amazement to every sincere christian. We call upon them to separate themselves from the unclean thing: "He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 11. That Mr. Campbell does still maintain this ruinous error, is unhappily too manifest to admit of a doubt from the following passages in his Extra, No. VI. dated August, 1833: "That we may, in the light of truth, ascertain the true and heaven-taught doctrine of regeneration, we shall cautiously survey the whole process as developed by the commissioned

Nothing can be more evident than that the work of conversion, (as inclusive of repentance and faith,) which is the very commencement of sanctification, must be not only an operation of a similar character to all subsequent acts of sanctification, but that it must in its own nature be the most difficult of them

teachers of the deep counsels of the only true God. That certain things, parts of this great process, may be well understood, certain terms which we are wont to use to represent them, must be well defined, and accurately apprehended. These terms are *Fact, Testimony, Faith, Repentance, Reformation, Bath of Regeneration, New Birth, Renewing of the Holy Spirit, Newness of Life*, [p. 339.] Mr. C. asserts this to be the "natural order." It will be seen in a moment, that Mr. C. places the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" *after* "Faith, Repentance, Reformation and the Bath of Regeneration" (or in plain words Baptism;) of course, therefore, he holds that faith and repentance, exist *before* and necessarily *without* the "renewing of the Holy Spirit;" and this view he endeavours to sustain by this exercise of ingenious sophistry; "If then the fact and the testimony are both the gift of God, we may well say that faith and eternal life are also the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord:" (p. 341.)—No; it may *not* be "well said" that "fact and testimony" *only* being given, "*faith* is the gift of God;" for both fact and testimony are abundantly given where faith is not possessed.—But to place Mr. C's sentiments beyond reasonable doubt, let us hear him once more:—"All that is done in us *before* regeneration, God our Father effects by *the word*, or the gospel as dictated and confirmed by his Holy Spirit. But *after* we are thus begotten and born by the Spirit of God—after our new birth, the Holy Spirit is shed on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." This last indeed is a most extraordinary statement, so constructed that it will admit of two interpretations directly opposed to each other. The first clause affirms, that "all that is done in us *before* regeneration—(that is *baptism*—for that is Mr. C's *regenerating ordinance*) is effected by "the word;" from which all the "disciples" who deny the work of the Spirit in producing repentance and faith, will have the gratification to see that (to use their own terms) this most *profound* thinker and *lucid* writer agrees with them. But then there are a very considerable number of the "disciples" who having professed to be converted by the personal influences of the Spirit, do not like

all. It is every where described throughout the word of God: as being brought from darkness to light—as old things passing away, and all things becoming new—as having eternal life attached to it, because it includes or ensures that imputed righteousness and personal holiness, without which no

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to represent themselves as either hypocrites or fools; and still more do not desire *wholly* to quench the Spirit by appropriating to themselves a glory which belongs to him: and how are these to be appeased?—The last clause will keep them quiet—"After we are thus begotten and born by the Spirit of God:" Thus those who deny the Spirit have Mr. C. to agree with them; and those who affirm his influences, may think he agrees also with them. Hot or cold—black or white, as the occasion may require!

If by this ingenious device it be still a matter of dispute with any what are Mr. C's sentiments on this point, let them learn a lesson from the ancients. It was one of the characteristics of the heathen oracles (to which the apostle alludes in renouncing "the hidden things of dishonesty") that from their sacred caverns they issued responses to their deluded votaries and enquirers capable of various and even opposite interpretations. Thus, when Crœsus, after having offered presents of immense value, sought direction from the Delphian oracle, whether he should make war with the Persians, he obtained for answer, that if he did, "he should dissolve a great empire." Deeming the oracle propitious, he made war against Cyrus, and fulfilled the prophecy by the dissolution and destruction of *his own* empire being the result. So now, upon an essential doctrine, the votaries of the oracle of Bethany do not understand its decision; one half maintaining that it admits the necessity of the personal influences of the Spirit to induce repentance and faith, while the other half inveighs against such a sentiment as "immoral." They are in danger of doing far worse than Crœsus; he risked an *empire* by trusting to a pretended prophet—they their *souls*.

There are yet another class of followers of Mr. Campbell, who inform us respecting the doctrine of the influence of the Spirit, that they come to no decision—they "leave that:" Let them hear Christ say, "He that is not with me is against me." At any rate, if they "leave" the essential doctrines of the New Testament, they must excuse us if we also "leave" them.

man shall see the Lord;—as being made alive—"quickened" the very resurrection term itself being used.—Yea, as not merely involving future bliss, but as an actual passing "from death unto life." (John v. 24.) It is in vain to pretend that this is the state of a believer *after baptism;* it is he that "heareth and believeth" who is in this state of mind and of favour with God. Let it be but clearly seen what it is that has been maintained to be effected without the personal operation of the Spirit, and no *renewed man ever will receive it;* he will remember that in ancient times it was deemed blasphemy if a *man* made himself *equal* with God; and will not dare think of thus making himself his superior? but will rather keep in prayerful consideration, those awful words of our Lord, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world neither in the world to come?" (Matt. xiii. 32.)

CHAP. IV.

The necessity of the work of the Spirit in conversion. The argument from the universal experience of Christians.

The sentiment expressed in the motto of the celebrated CHILLINGWORTH, "In essentials unity—in non-essentials liberty," may indeed have been

abused ; but we still hold it to be the same. It has often been asked—as if the question subverted their position—"Who shall decide what points of doctrine are essential, and what non-essential?" But the reply is fully satisfactory: all men *must*, and invariably *do*, decide this question for themselves. The Unitarian complains of the intolerance which refuses to acknowledge him as partaking of the blessings of an atonement which he disbelieves; while he himself necessarily pursues the same course towards the Deist. The Pelagian,* who denies the necessity of the Spirit's influence in conversion, refuses to acknowledge the salvation of those who deny the atoning work of Christ; but complains bitterly of the bigotry of those who cannot admit

*"A new controversy arose in the church during this century, and its pestilential effects extended themselves through the following ages. The authors of them were Pelagius and Cælestius, both monks ; the former a Briton, and the latter a native of Ireland : they lived at Rome in the greatest reputation, and were universally esteemed on account of their extraordinary piety and virtue. These monks looked upon the doctrines which were commonly received "*considering the general corruption of human nature, and the necessity of Divine grace to enlighten the understanding, and purify the heart,*" as prejudicial to the progress of holiness and virtue, and tending to lull mankind in a presumptuous and fatal security. They maintained that these doctrines were as false as they were pernicious: that the sins of our first parents were imputed to them alone and not to their posterity ; that we derive no corruption from their fall, but are born as pure and unspotted, as Adam came out of the forming hand of his Creator : that mankind, therefore, are capable of repentance and amendment: and of arriving to the highest degrees of piety and virtue by the use of their natural faculties and powers : that, indeed,, external grace is necessary to excite their endeavours ; but that they have no need of the internal succours of the Divine Spirit." *Mosheim Ec. Hist.* B. i. Cent. v. Chap. v. Sec. 23.

him to Christian fellowship. It is evident that some *belief* is essential to the existence of Christian character; and that there are doctrines the denial of which precludes the possibility of recognizing the individual as a Christian. We apprehend the influence of the Spirit in conversion is one of those doctrines; and if it is imagined that this position is incompatible with the amiable lives of some of its avowed opponents, we would remind the objector that his argument avails him nothing unless he will admit to Christian fellowship the Unitarian, the Deist, the Mahometan, and the Pagan, on the same grounds.

These observations have been rendered necessary by the ground of argument taken in this chapter; its title implies that the writer, however painful it may be to maintain such a position, does not see how any can be regarded as Christians who deny their conversion to result from the work of the Spirit on their hearts. It is surely self-evident that the denial of this doctrine affords those who maintain it no alternative but to give up their hopes as connected with the fact, that the Spirit of God has *begun* the work of renewal in their hearts, as vain and delusive; or to regard those who deny such an operation on their own hearts, as destitute of the first principles of spiritual existence. We adopt the latter alternative, and rest perfectly conscious that all allegations of breach of Christian charity in so doing are as unfounded in principle as they are uncalled for by the state of our feelings. It is no less a kind faith-

fulness to those infected with this destructive error, than a regard for consistency, which necessitates such a course.

Let us now appeal to the testimony of history, respecting this question, as supplied equally by the doctrines upheld in the church and the individual experience of Christians in all ages. Hear the experience of Paul himself, when describing his natural state, he says: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" (Rom. viii. 17.) but when speaking of his state after conversion, he says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."—(1 Cor. xv. 10.) Nor was it only in his personal experience, the Apostle acknowledged this great truth; he affirms all his ministerial success to be attributable to the same blessed source: "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." How could the grace of God labour? Was it not that it induced Paul to labour, as well as sustained him in it? And was it not the same grace which induced him to be what he was? The same apostle, in speaking to the Corinthians, had previously assured them that he was only the instrument by which they believed, "even as the Lord gave to every man." (1 Cor. iii. 5.) We are well aware that the phrase "grace of God" frequently applies to other manifestations of favor than the communication of divine influence: but it is equally apparent that it frequently includes that blessing also, as in the following passage, in addition to those already quoted: "the exceeding

grace of God in you." (2 Cor. ix. 14.) That the saints received this grace in the very commencement of their renewed lives, is equally evident from the manner in which Paul speaks of the experience both of the Galatian and the Philippian converts. To the former, he says; "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. iii. 3.) and to the latter; "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.)

Such then were the views and experience of Christians in apostolic times. That the experience of those who "*know* the joyful sound," continued the same in all ages, the page of history fully testifies. This essential truth was borne ample testimony to by the preaching, the lives, and the deaths of the early martyrs, and, indeed does not appear to have been controverted till the fifth century. The night of papal darkness was then fast closing in on the Church: but as the fiery pillar was most brilliant in the darkest and most troubled night the Israelites ever knew, so the glorious truths of the gospel appear in the most striking relief in the labors and lives of their advocates during the papal apostacy: and we challenge the fact that the doctrine of the Spirit's work in conversion was ever denied by any of those noble-minded men who, during many ages, counted not their lives dear, that they might leave their testimony against the debasing tyranny of the man of sin. That those celebrated communities of

holy men, the Waldenses and Albigenses, who sustained, with such undaunted fortitude, during so many years, the tremendous fury of papal persecution, held the truth for which we are now contending, is abundantly evident from their own doctrinal statement, which, for the purpose of rebutting the calumnies of their malignant foes, not as authoritative on the conscience of any, they published to the world. In their confession of the year 1544, occurs the following declaration:—3. "We believe in the Holy Spirit as the comforter, proceeding from the Father and from the Son: by whose inspiration we are taught to pray: being by him renewed in the Spirit of our minds: who creates us anew unto good works and from whom we receive the knowledge of the truth."

That these views were maintained, and these influences experienced by the spiritual heroes of the glorious reformation, whether the Calvinists of Switzerland, the Lutherans of Germany, the Puritans of England, or the Presbyterians of Scotland, Calvin, Luther, Wycliffe and Knox, amidst a host of worthies have faithfully testified. Since the days in which these truths triumphed, the experience of the church has been that those communities which have "held fast the form of sound words" (if not destroyed by the errors of Antinomianism) have spiritually prospered; while those churches who have abandoned their reliance on the Spirit of God, have sunk into a cold formality, and have been left to deny the first principles of the gospel. To this fact the state of

the Presbyterian body in England, when compared with that of the Independent, and Baptist and Evangelical Episcopalians, as well as the state of Protestantism on the continent of Europe, when compared with that in the United States, afford irrefragable proof.—In the present day, where is the Congregational or Presbyterian church, where the Methodist or Evangelical Episcopalian, where the Baptist, in any quarter of the globe, who would receive a person into communion on a profession of repentance and faith, asserted not to be produced by the influences of the Spirit? They all confess with united voice, that it is the blessed Spirit of God, who hath made them to differ from the impenitent by whom they are still surrounded: it is the hope that he began the work that sustains their faith that he will carry it on in their hearts; and with undivided hallelujahs, they sing, "Him first, him midst, him last, and him in every thing."

It may be alledged that the universality of doctrinal sentiment, can be no assurance of its truth. This position we readily admit:—there should however be reasons clear and strong which induce us to oppose ourselves to the general testimony of the christian church. But this is not a case to which this observation applies. It is not merely a matter of *doctrinal sentiment*, but of *actual experience*. A man might just as well tell me that it was a mere delusion, that it was the fire which warmed my frozen limbs and restored them to life and activity, as that it was not the Spirit's influence which melted my

heart, and caused the tears of repentance to flow or the joys of redeeming love to exhilirate my soul with rapturous delight. Reader, which will you believe, that the testimonials of at once the most intelligent, the most benevolent men in all ages, as to the feelings of their own minds have been an entire delusion, and that the "ancient gospel" is now, for the first time, preached since the days of the Apostles, or that the Spirit of God has really begun and continued the work in their hearts, and that the assumption alluded to is as absolutely unfounded, as it is superlatively arrogant?

CHAP. V.

The necessity of the Work of the Spirit in Conversion:—The argument from the impossibility of otherwise rationally accounting for the existence of the fact.

Two questions at least arise from the admission of the fact that the heart of man has undergone a change; first by whom was it effected? secondly, by what method? The answer to the latter is involved in the former. If the *difference* existing between the converted and unconverted be attributable to *God*, it must necessarily follow that he has acted on the former different to what he has done upon the latter; and

all those who admit this fact have ever held such additional action to be the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is only needful therefore to show that the fact of conversion cannot be rationally accounted for, without admitting special action of some kind on the part of the Divine Being, and it will be no longer denied, we apprehend by any, that such special action consists in the influence of the Holy Spirit. We challenge the closest attention of our readers to the process of reasoning which appears to us to be decisive in this case.

The fact before us is the existence of an important—an all-important—difference between two members of the human family; a difference, on which depends the eternal destiny of the individuals in question; one man repents and believes, and another continues in his previous state of impenitence and unbelief. "*Who* made thee to *differ?*" is therefore the touch-stone of the case. Now it is a principle of nature, from which the Deity does not depart in his moral government of mankind, that "like causes, operating on like subjects produce like effects." If men are alike essentially depraved, and if the divine testimony be communicated equally to them, and that is the sole agent by which c nversion were effected, conversion would follow either in *all* cases or *none;* but this is not the fact:—on the contrary, then, some repent and believe, while others take occasion only to harden their minds in sin. There must be a difference either in the subject operated upon, or in the causes operating, because there is a difference in

the result: either God acts uniformly on objects essentially differing from each other: or otherwise on objects essentially of the same nature God himself acts differently. The question is not now by *what method* the eternally momentous difference is effected, but *by whom?* The question is analogous in its operation to that put by our Lord to the Pharisees, respecting the preaching of John: "Was it from heaven or of men?" They could not, or would not tell. They said, in effect, to our Lord, as it is now said by those who advocate this truth, "We leave that!" But we must insist on bringing our opponents to the point:—If men are totally, and therefore equally, depraved, they present a like subject; and when operated on by like causes a difference of result certainly never will ensue. Either therefore, the doctrine of total and equal depravity must be given up, and something spiritually good be maintained to exist naturally in some men; or else special action of some kind on the part of God must be admitted. That in this distressing dilemma, the former method of solving this (to them) extreme difficulty, is adopted by the opposers of Divine influence, there is abundant evidence: and yet dare they come forth and avow that *all* conversions are to be accounted for (and the *principle must be uniform*) on the ground that the least depraved of men are those who are converted to God? Were Mary Magdalen, the woman of Samaria, the thief on the cross, yea Paul himself, instances in accordance with this method of solving the question?

We repeat the question, therefore, and challenge the reply: *On what principle is the fact that one man is converted, and that another is not, to be accounted for?* Shall it be said "The Father converted him by the word?" But it is maintained also, and correctly, that the word was equally bestowed on the unbeliever. This, therefore, will not account for the existing difference. What, then, is to be done?—Some say, as the Pharisees did:—"We cannot tell." And yet these persons profess to be very students in divinity—to be far removed from the ignorant multitude who are still within the dark pale of the spiritual Babylon; while they, themselves, know not the lesson which lisping babes in Christ delight to repeat. Others, weary of the inconsistencies in which they find themselves involved by their departure from the truth, endeavor to liberate their minds from thraldom by doubting or even denying the necessity of any radical change at all: while a third class console themselves by *insinuating* what they dare not *avow*, that the all decisive difference results from some being naturally "more noble" than their fellow men.

Is there any heart that has known the power of sovereign grace, that can bear thus to behold the glory of Him whose delight it is to save the very chiefest sinners thus cast down, that the pride of the "least depraved" of men may be exalted on its ruins? Let none be deluded with words smooth as oil, but which are mixed with the deadly poison of asps. What should we think of the sincerity of the

repentance of that thief who, while confessing the crime of having stolen silver or gold, was, at the same moment, secreting about his person the brightest jewel—the most valued object—we possessed? And what shall we think of the sincerity of that sinner, who, while professing to be penitent for having defrauded God of his rights so long, shall rob the Redeemer of the most precious jewel of his crown, by appropriating to himself the glory of that repentance, which, if it exist in his heart at all, is one of those precious gifts which Jesus shed his heart's blood to purchase, and ascended to heaven to bestow, through the agency of the blessed Spirit?

CHAP. VI.

The absolute necessity of the influence of the Spirit in conversion:—The argument from the express words of Scripture.

[The operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of a sinner is not to be regarded as occasional or accidental, but as essential and uniform. Conversion to God never has taken place, and never will take place without it. And if this be the case, it is but saying the same thing in other words, to assert that his influence is absolutely necessary to the production of this effect.]

It is far from being a just deduction from the writings of any author, that he hesitates respecting

the correctness of a sentiment, because he does not make great effort to prove its truth. It may, and frequently does, arise from precisely an opposite reason—that he apprehends the point to be so plain as not to require any such effort. This must always be admitted when an author evidently *assumes* the truth of the point in question throughout his writings, and frequently makes use of it as indisputable. For instance, in a work on mental philosophy, you would not expect to find a laboured argument to prove the existence of the soul: neither in the Revelation of God do we find any argument made use of to prove the existence of the Deity—that is assumed to be evident from "the things that are made." In a dissertation on the qualities, and effects, and importance of light, we do not expect vehement assertion that it is generated by the rays of the sun—*every recipient of his rays is conscious of this fact;* and fully do we believe that it is thus also with all those who are illuminated by the Spirit of the Most High. So far, therefore, from there being cause for surprise that the direct testimony of Scripture is not more abundant, it is rather matter of admiration, that on a point so self-evident, the direct proof from Scripture should be so abundant as it is found to be; and if there are those who have vaunted themselves, or at least felt themselves excused under the idea, that there is no express assertion in Scripture of the influence of the Spirit in conversion, we trust they will yet be led to see that their position is utterly untenable.

[It is willingly admitted that whatever support the doctrine of divine influence in conversion derives from the fact of its being impossible otherwise rationally to account for the fact of conversion itself, that this is a point on which, independently of divine revelation, we have no means of obtaining complete and satisfactory knowledge. When any man does in fact turn to God, under what influence he did so might be doubted, were it not revealed; and yet more difficult might it be to decide whether any other man would turn to God without a given influence, unless that also were declared by a being of competent information. According to their various views, some might suppose one thing, and some another; but the voice of authority puts all our imaginations to silence, and announces, as from Him that knows the heart to its lowest depths, that, without his Spirit, no man ever did repent or ever will. We turn, therefore, to the language of the holy writ, and may place the passages which bear upon the subject before us in such an arrangement as follows:

1. Sometimes the existence of an unconverted state is expressed by asserting the absence of the Holy Spirit: as in Jude 19, 20; where ungodly men are described as "sensual, having not the Spirit." If the fact of not having the Spirit be a decisive evidence of an unconverted state, it is plain that no man is converted without becoming a partaker of it.

2. Sometimes the condition of man by nature is

represented as absolutely requiring the influence of the Spirit. "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life. No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John v. 40. vi. 44. The only assignable influence by which this opposition is in fact ever overcome, is that of the Holy Spirit; which therefore is clearly necessary to the conversion of a sinner.] These passages, while they afford no ground whatever for the notion of *inability*, (since whatever a man can do, if he be drawn or *inclined*, he literally *can* do, whether inclined or not,) are decisive on the point, that the sinner never *will* come to Christ, unless the Father draw him. Whether any thing *more* than *certainty of result* is designed to be expressed by the terms *can not*, used in those passages will be discussed in a future chapter—that nothing *less* can be designed must be evident to any reflecting mind.

3. [Sometimes the success of the gospel generally is referred to the power of the same glorious agent. 1 Thess. i. 5. "For our gospel came unto you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost." "The epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God." 2 Cor. iii. 3. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? So then neither is he

that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.—"Ye believed, according as the Lord gave to every man." Now the gospel is the grand means of conversion, and in the accomplishment of this end all its success lies; but this is declared to depend upon the accompanying influence of the Holy Spipit, and therefore also conversion.

4. Sometimes the sacred writers directly ascribe to the Spirit the exercises involved in conversion to God. So in 1 Peter, i. 22. "Seeing ye have purified your souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit." "Obeying the truth," though under another form of speech, is identical with conversion; and the apostle affirms it to have been done "through the Spirit."] "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." Acts xvi. 14. The decisive character of this passage, as ordinarily understood, is apparent to every one. Two methods are adopted to evade its force; one to assert that Lydia was already a believer, and therefore, that though the operation of the Spirit is admitted, the case is not in point: the other that she was not a believer, and that the "opening" spoken of was not an operation of the Spirit, but an effect of some natural circumstances, as "curiosity" for instance. That Lydia knew any thing of Jesus Christ before this time is an assumption utterly unwarranted by Scripture history. If "curiosity" opened the heart of Lydia, it is somewhat strange "the Lord" should be brought into

connection with this state of mind; it has generally and truly been held, that people who hear from curiosity only, seldom get much good. These contradictory methods of avoiding so plain a passage only indicate a melancholy harmony of determination, to deprive in any case the Spirit of the Lord of the glory due unto his name.

5. [The change of heart and character in conversion is made the subject of a corresponding and characteristic promise. "A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.] This passage is uncontrovertibly decisive as to the object for which the Spirit should be given—"to cause men to walk in his statutes;" and totally subversive of the idea that the Holy Spirit is communicated only because men have believed and do obey. It is equally true that the Holy Spirit, causes men to walk to the baptismal water, as that it rests upon them when there.

6. In exact conformity with this prophecy of ancient times, we find it affirmed that Jesus Christ was exalted "to give repentance (μετανοια a change of mind) and remission of sins," (Acts v. 31;) and we also find the fact affirmed (Acts xi. 16, 18,) that by the bestowment of the Holy Ghost, God had "granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life;" the same word signifying a change of mind being also again used. Nothing here is said about the

"fact" and "testimony" only being given; it is the *change of heart* itself which, in fulfilment of this prophecy, is given; the stony heart is taken away, and the heart of flesh, the feeling, repenting, heart or state of mind, is communicated. So again in the 21st verse: and the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed." It was *not* owing to the mere fact of preaching, but to the additional fact of the "hand of the Lord" being with them that "a great number believed." So the Apostle affirms in the passages already quoted from his first epistle to the Corinthians, that they "believed as the Lord *gave* to every man;" and again that "it is God that *giveth* the *increase*."

Other passages of similar import might be adduced, but one more shall suffice: "by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8. Suppose it could be found out that in some esteemed and ancient manuscripts this passage read, "and that of yourselves, it is not the gift of God," should we not have it declared, that the correction ended the controversy? That the passage was too explicit to be mistaken, and that nothing but the greatest prejudice could now maintain that faith was the gift of God? Well if this overthrow would result from the text being reversed, what overthrow results from the text standing as it really does? Who does it not leave inexcusably guilty now? Admitting the text to read, as every unprejudiced man of common sense would read it, and the only way in which the pas-

sage is sense at all, it does decide the case that "faith," not "facts," not "testimony" only, but "*faith* is the gift of God, and not of ourselves."—The necessities of a party, however, have suggested the equally ungrammatical and senseless construction, that the antecedent to the relative, "*that* not of yourselves, &c." is not "faith," but "grace." Why who ever supposed that the grace of God was of ourselves? Where was the necessity of introducing any such caution? Where the propriety of asserting that the grace of God was the gift of God? —in other words, that the gift of God was the gift of God? But let the Apostle speak for himself. He tells the Ephesians they are "saved by grace," "through faith." Now faith, under whatever influence performed, is clearly an act of the human mind; from this circumstance the Apostle deemed it possible they might find, as hundreds now do, some source of spiritual pride; he therefore hastens to remind them that though faith was the act of their minds, yet in another and most important sense, it was "not of themselves," it was "the gift of God" —it was God that wrought in them. There is no fear in leaving this passage to the common sense of Christians, or even of mankind at large. The grammatical criticism, by which it is attempted to be perverted is altogether superficial and utterly untenable.*

* The critical observation attached by Dr. Doddridge to this passage is so fully confirmatory of the views the author has taken, that he cannot refrain from inserting it here.—"Some explain the following clause [and this is not of your-

7. We have now finally to enquire the express testimony of Scripture on one more point only. If any thing more is bestowed upon any, beside the knowledge of the "facts" and the "testimony," we shall surely find the grateful acknowledgment of such peculiar favor: if on the contrary, no such additional favor is bestowed, no acknowledgment of it will of course be found. To whom have good men in apostolic times, and in all ages, attributed their change of heart, to themselves or to God? "But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he hath loved us: even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."—Eph. ii. 4, 5.—and again, verse 10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Can any acknowledgments be more humble or more specific? Again, when Bar-

selves,] as if it were only a repetition of what was said before, that the constitution that made faith the way to salvation was not of their own appointment, but of God's. But this is making the apostle guilty of a flat tautology for which there is no occasion. Taking the clause as we explain it, that is, asserting the *agency of divine grace* in the *production* of *faith*, as well as in the constitution of the method of salvation by it, the thought rises with great spirit. As for the apostle using the word (*touto*) in the neuter gender, to signify *faith*, the thing he had just before been speaking of, there are so many similar instances to be found in scripture, that one would wonder how it were possible for any judicious critics to have relied so much on this as they do, in rejecting what seems beyond all comparison the weightiest and most natural interpretation. Compare the original of the following texts: Phil. i. 28.—Gal. iii. 17. iv. 9; and for the like construction of other Greek authors of undoubted credit, see Elsner, *Observ.* vol. i. p. 128; and Raphel. *Annot. ex Herod.* p. 186."

nabas "saw the grace of God," as manifested not in the preaching the gospel, but in the believing it, he was glad; and so of the apostle, it is affirmed (Acts xviii. 27.) that "when he was come he helped much them which had believed through grace." Paul too could say (1 Cor. xv. 10,) "by the grace of God, I am what I am." And in accordance with this is the language of all the saints, ascribing the glory of their salvation to God alone. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." (Psalm cxv. 1.)

The existence of an unconverted state is expressed by the absence of the Holy Spirit—the condition of man is represented as absolutely requiring the influence of the Spirit—the success of the gospel is attributed to the power of the same blessed Spirit—the exercises of mind in conversion are directly attributed to the Spirit—the change of heart by the Spirit, is the express subject of promise in ancient prophesy—it is affirmed that Christ was exalted to give this very blessing—the fact that it was bestowed by the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, is also expressly affirmed—the reception of such gracious influences are gratefully acknowledged: and yet individuals are found who vauntingly deny that there is any support from Scripture to the doctrine of the influence of the Spirit in the conversion of the soul! However this may be, nothing can be more decisive than the various, yet uniform, evidence of Scripture on the point under consideration; [nor is it easy to imagine that any man regard-

ing the authority of the divine word, can entertain the contrary opinion, or a sentiment which necessarily implies it. In the face of this overwhelming mass of divine testimony, it were scarcely less than insane to doubt for a moment, not merely the high importance, but the absolute necessity of the Spirit's influence to the conversion of a sinner. It may be added, however, that these declarations have an echo in the breast of every man. Those who would read their own hearts, would have been powerfully led towards this conclusion, even if it had not been revealed; and what the divine oracles thus affirm, is established by the uniform and universal fact, that no man ever does turn to God without the acknowledged interposition of an unseen influence making him willing as in the day of power. The author cannot conclude this chapter, without humbly acknowledging his part in the general truth. As he finds it in his bible, so he finds it in his heart. There is no fact of which he has a more thorough conviction than this, that in his nature there dwelleth no good thing, but, on the contrary, every evil; and that the blessed Spirit is absolutely necessary for him even to think a good thought. Had the experience of even a short life not taught him this lesson, he must have been blind and infatuated indeed.]

CHAP. VII.

The necessity of the influences of the Spirit in Conversion:—The argument from the figurative expressions of Scripture.

After the abundant and direct testimony already adduced, it will be necessary to enter only briefly on this collateral source of support. The whole of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, though figurative in its language, is directly in accordance with the view which has been taken of this doctrine. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."--Our Lord assures Nicodemus that unless a man be "born from above," (this is decidedly the proper translation of ανωθεν he cannot see the kingdom of God:" and in reply to a question from Nicodemus, which rendered it manifest that he did not apprehend the spirituality of our Lord's meaning, our Lord explains the phrase "born from above," by being "born of water and of the Spirit;" that is "of water, *even* of the Spirit;" the word *even*, being an equally cor-

rect rendering of the Greek conjunction καὶ relieves the passage of all difficulty. It is evident our Lord was speaking wholly of an *internal change*, not at all of an *external ordinance*, for there is no reference to baptism whatever through the whole chapter, except the supposed allusion in the term "water;" manifestly the *figure*, of which the phrase *the Spirit*, connected by the word *even*, is *explanatory*. It is in every respect evident that our Lord is here speaking of his spiritual, and not of his visible kingdom, (and, therefore, of the cleansing operations of the Spirit, and not of baptism,) for it is most certain that many persons may and do enter the visible kingdom without ever being born of the Spirit; and this is rendered the more clear from that expression of our Lord's: "that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:" the former term implying an unconverted, and the latter a converted state of heart. Exactly the same figure is found in Titus iii. 5,—"The washing of regeneration, *even* the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

That striking passage (John i. 13,) in which the evangelist speaking of those who believed, declares that they "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God," is as strong in support of our view as any figurative expressions in their nature can possibly be; and when taken in conjunction with those expressions in the first general epistle of John, "every one that doeth righteousness, is born of him," surely makes it evident that it is an internal change of heart, and not an exter-

nal ordinance, that is spoken of: for it is well known that it cannot be affirmed that every person who is baptized, is "born of God;" nor are there many now living who will choose, we apprehend, to affirm that no unbaptized persons are truly born of God. The same expression "born of God," is several times subsequently used by the apostle John; but always with respect to personal character, and not with any reference to any ordinance of the church.

Under whatever figures the individual effects or the general spread of the gospel are set forth, whether it be the "leaven hid in three measures of meal," or the "grain of mustard seed," the same principle of divine influence to give efficiency, is ever manifest, and constitute a link of an unbroken chain of evidence, which cannot fail to convince the mind of any candid enquirer.

CHAP. VIII.

Objections answered.

THE positions, we have endeavoured, we trust successfully, to maintain in the preceding chapters, are, first, That there is a personal and special influence of the Spirit super-additional to the word; and secondly, that such influence is actually exerted in the conversion of the unrenewed, as well as in the sanctification of the renewed heart. We shall consider separately the objections which have been

supposed to lie against either or both of these positions. Before entering on them we would premise, that we hold ourselves bound only to refute, or to demonstrate the inapplicability of objections relating to the views we have expressed. If objections exist against the opinions of others either as expressed from the pulpit or the press, we leave to others the work of defending their sentiments; it is surely sufficient if we rebut objections only so far as they pertain to our own.

With respect to the first position, that there is a personal influence of the Spirit super-additional to the word, all the objections which have been urged may be concentrated in the two following; the first relating to the structure of the human mind; the second to the excellency of the word of God.

1. With respect to the first of these objections it has been urged, that the human mind is capable of being operated on by motive alone, and therefore the truth as exhibited either in the oral or written word, can be the only medium of affecting it. The constitution of the human mind, is the subject of the first chapter of the second part of this volume: it will be found that it is maintained to be wholly of a rational character; and it is conceived that there is nothing in the preceding pages which is in the slightest degree inconsistent with such a view. It is readily admitted that the mind is capable only of being influenced by motive; this is a characteristic essential to its distinction from matter, which is acted on only by force. The whole of

the objection now under consideration is based upon this fallacy—that motive is only capable of being brought to bear upon the mind in an oral or written form. The feelings induced by contemplaplation of the ashy paleness of approaching dissolution, are equally rational with those that are called forth by the torrent of impassioned eloquence;—and the creative imaginings of luxuriant fancy, which picture forth objects of which we have never heard, are no less indications of a rational constitution than the deductions which the writings of Euclid enable us to form. What we have maintained is, that attention to the word is induced otherwise than by the word itself, and that such inducement is to be attributed to the suasion of the Spirit of God. That there is ample foundation for this position, without exceeding the just analogy derived from the varied modes of action of one human mind on another, we deem has been made apparent; and even were that analogy exceeded by the Almighty Father of spirits, we do not perceive that such influence would be justly chargable with being irrational. When the objector is prepared to say the spirit of man never influenced his mind without words, it will be time enough to admit the force of his objection to allow the Spirit of God an access to the mind distinct from the word of God. For further elucidation of the consistency of the work of the Spirit with the rational constitution of man, the reader is referred to Part II. Chap. iv.

2. If there is no force in the objection respecting the constitution of the human mind, there is not even the appearance, in the views we have maintained, of an idea in any degree derogatory to the divine word. We have not spoken directly or indirectly of the word being a "dead letter," or of its being "energized" by the Spirit of God. Our views are wholly at variance with the sentiments implied by such expressions. We have no idea that the *word* undergoes any alteration, or is the subject in any case of any divine influence—it is the state of the heart, and that alone, which undergoes any change by the power of the Spirit of God.—Truly, do we believe with the Psalmist, that the word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Such is our view of the power of divine truth, that it appears to us utterly impossible that any man should yield to its sacred claims that attention which he knows it deserves at his hands, and not be transformed by it. Surely this is not contradicted by the statement that no man ever does yield such attention without the Lord by his Spirit opens his heart! On the contrary, these combined views give honour due both to the word of truth and the Spirit of grace; and accord with that declaration of the apostle, that we are saved "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

But however the general doctrine of the personal influence of the Spirit be admitted, some may be still inclined to object that to assert its necessity in conversion, is

1. To contradict the plain command to repent, given alike to all men, and consequently to those who are without the Spirit. This objection has no foundation on which to rest, as it respects the views maintained in this volume, whatever may be the case with the views of others. It is surely not contradictory to command a man to do what he will not do; nor to maintain that the command was just in itself though no entreaties or threatenings ever succeeded in inducing him to comply. If this appear no contradiction in contemplating the action of the mind in common life, neither can it be in the matter of religion. If the reader will pay a candid attention to the definition of disposition and power in Part II. Chap. ii., and to the nature of human responsibility, in Chap. vii. we apprehend he will find himself compelled to waive entirely all objections on this point.

2. It may again be objected, if the influence of the Spirit be necessary to conversion, how can it be accounted for that men are directed to "repent and believe," and not rather, as some teach, to pray for the Spirit, that they may be enabled to repent and believe. The reason will appear by a moment's consideration; the measure of the divine requirements is man's *duty* not his *inclination;* and the limits of a man's duty are his ability and opportunity, not his disposition. To represent that an unrepenting and unbelieving man is to pray for the Spirit, is to tell a man to pray for what he does not desire, and in a manner in which he certainly will

never be heard or answered. When the sinner feels the wretchedness of his condition and the hardness of his heart, and is willing to seek the aid he needs through the all-prevailing name of Jesus; then, and not till then, is he *encouraged*, not *commanded*, to pray for the influence of the blessed Spirit. To this state he is to be brought by the exhibition of his utter sinfulness, dreadful danger, and deplorable depravity, on the one hand; and the full and free atonement of Jesus, on the other. The reader will find this point set in a clear light, by perusing the close of Chap. vii. Part II. in connection with Part III.

3. The only remaining objection of any apparent force is, the allegation that the Holy Spirit is bestowed only in baptism, which not being required of any previous to repentance and faith, that state of mind must exist previously to, and irrespective of, the influence of the Spirit. Certainly if the premises were true, the conclusion would be undeniable. But the position, though attempted to be supported by ingenuity and sophistry perhaps as specious as ever were exercised in the cause of error in any age, is utterly incapable of withstanding the slightest examination. The communications of the Spirit limited to the day of Pentecost for the Apostles and their disciples, and to the time of baptism in all subsequent ages!—Do the advocates of this notion ever read the New Testament in their own tongue? They profess so to do, and boast the peculiar perfection of their knowledge of "historical facts." Let us then refer to history. We find the dis-

ciples, during the life of our Lord, working miracles: does this prove they did not possess the Spirit till the day of pentecost?* We find our Lord telling them, previous to his death, (John xiv. 17.) "But ye know him for he dwelleth with you." And again, (John xx. 22, 23,) after his resurrection, "he breathed on them," and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whosesoever sins ye remit," &c. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit being bestowed on these disciples at their baptism; but surely there is abundant evidence that whatever additional and abundant outpourings of the Spirit they received at the day of pentecost, they were in possession of a large measure of his influences before that time.

Let us now see how the case stands with respect to the history of the bestowment of the Spirit, subsequently to the day of pentecost. The first instance we have recorded of the bestowment of the Holy Ghost is that of the disciples at Samaria, who had been converted under the ministry of Philip, and had been baptized by him; yet some time after it was declared the Holy Ghost (in his miraculous gifts) was as yet "fallen upon none of them; but Peter and John came from Jerusalem, and *laid their hands on them*, and they received the Holy Ghost." Laying on of the hands, therefore, subsequently to baptism, and not baptism itself, was the medium of their receiving this "gift." In the

*Perhaps the abbettors of this notion will join the Pharisees and say, the disciples wrought their miracles by the power of Beelzebub!

next case of baptism, that of the Eunuch, no mention is made of his receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the next, that of the great apostle of the Gentiles, Ananias laid his hands on Paul, declaring that he was sent that he "might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."—(Acts ix. 17.) After that he was baptised. In this instance, therefore, the Holy Ghost was given by *laying on of hands before baptism.* The narration which follows that of Paul, is that of Cornelius, which would of itself be fatal to this ancient error new revived. While Peter was yet speaking, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word," the consequence of which was that they "spoke with tongues:" *after* they had received this gift, Peter "commanded them to be baptised;" (Acts x. 13.) The next case of baptism recorded is that of Lydia; no mention is made of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then that of the jailor; no mention of any gift of the Holy Ghost. Then that of Crispus and all his house; no mention of the Holy Ghost. The next case, that of the Ephesians, is decidedly against this notion: after they had been baptised, "Paul laid hands on them; and the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues:" (Acts xix. 6.)—What do "facts" and "testimony" say then on this point? That there is not *one single instance recorded of the gift of the Holy Ghost being communicated in baptism*, while in all the instances, save that of Cornelius, it was bestowed during the *laying on of hands.*

We shall now refer to the only passage relating to this subject, which is not, on the very first view, directly adverse to the error we are combatting—"Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In the first place there is not in this passage the slightest intimation, that the gift of the Holy Ghost should be bestowed in baptism: the correct construction of the sentence requires that it should be regarded as a promise, of what the disciples should receive *after* baptism: "be baptized," "and ye *shall receive*." In the next place the phrase used, is, that which always implies miraculous gifts, and not merely sanctifying influences on the disposition. The apostle appears even to have taken particular pains to avoid this construction: he does not say, "and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost;" but "the gift (δωρεαν) of the Holy Ghost." Thus utterly fails the solitary passage, by ingenious perversion of which, in opposition to all other "facts and testimony" the church has been infested with this pernicious error. We trust that most who have imbibed it will come back to the "ancient" truth, that every good thought, of which repentance and faith are some of the very best, are implanted in the heart of the sinner, through the personal influence of the Spirit of God; while his miraculous "gifts" were bestowed in diverse methods, but principally by laying on of hands.

If there are other objections, we believe that the succeeding chapters, written in a land where such absurdities had either never been heard of, or had run out the length of their natural lives, and passed into merited and undisturbed oblivion, will entirely dispel them from the minds of any candid enquirer after truth.

CHAP. IX

Of the certain Efficacy of the Spirit's Influence in Conversion.

In perfect correspondence and entire harmony with the doctrine that the influence of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in the work of conversion, is the assertion, that it is also CERTAINLY EFFECTUAL. By this language we mean, that whensoever the Spirit begins to operate upon the heart of a sinner for his conversion, he invariably accomplishes the work. He never suspends his interference till the work is achieved; nor are there any cases in which his influence is ineffectual to its attainment.

That there are many and great obstructions to conversion is readily admitted; but it must be manifest, we conceive, without any proof, that the di-

vine agent of whom we are speaking is *competent* to remove them all. Being divine, he is also almighty. Difficulty is a word totally inapplicable to him; and not less so in the conversion of a sinner, than in any other work he undertakes. If it be his gracious pleasure, therefore, to operate effectually to this end, there is nothing to hinder him from doing so. But have we reason to think that he will?

1. In taking, as of course we do, the affirmative side of this question, we may argue from the *wisdom* by which it must be conceived that the proceedings of the blessed Spirit are directed.

Now it is one of the most obvious dictates of wisdom, that a work which we do not mean to finish should not be begun; and not less so, that when a work is begun it should be finished, unless there be some paramount reason for its abandonment.—Nor are these dictates of merely human wisdom, since they are stamped with the impress of divine sanction, in the following address of our Lord to his disciples. Luke xiv. 28—30. "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." And if it be thus a matter of just reproach that a man should begin what he is not *able* to finish, how much more so if he should commence a work

which he did not mean, or had not constancy enough to complete, though he were able?

We need not hesitate, therefore, to apply the rule before us to the operation of the blessed Spirit. If his proceedings be sufficiently characterized by wisdom to withdraw them from the mockery of "all who behold" them, he will begin nothing which he does not mean to finish; nor will he, without urgent cause, forsake the work of his own hands. We say, *not without urgent cause*, not because we think such a case has ever existed, or ever will exist; but to make the hypothetical concession, for the sake of argument, that, if any good reason can be shewn why the work of conversion should be abandoned by its glorious Author after he has commenced it, we are ready to allow its force. But can any such reason be shewn, or even be conceived of, in reference to a being of whom all possible circumstances are perfectly foreknown? A reason that would lead to the abandonment of a work after it was begun, would operate yet more powerfully to prevent its being undertaken at all; so that, as no sufficient reason can be supposed to arise why the Spirit should renounce his design to accomplish the conversion of a sinner after he has commenced his work, its relinquishment, should it ever take place, could be ascribed to no other causes than such as would involve both the undertaking and its author in a total want of wisdom, and a just exposure to dishonour.

But the force of this argument is not yet fully

stated. The accomplishment of conversion when the work is begun, we have shewn to be necessary to shield its author from shame. But is this all that is to result to him? Far from it. Every work of his is to redound to his glory. How much more then is it to be maintained that he will make this work complete, since it cannot otherwise "shew forth his praise!" How inconceivably strange would it be, if, instead of this, he were only to surround himself with fragments, which, however beautiful and durable in themselves, would only be, on that account, the more lasting and afflictive sources of dishonour and regret!

2. If there is force in the general bearing of the preceding argument, it will be augmented by referring to the special character and *pre-eminent excellency* of the work in question. For if there be any object which, rather than another, a person of wisdom will strenuously pursue, it is surely such an one as exhibits the highest excellence, and leads to the most important results. Let the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion be regarded in this light. Without assigning it a pre-eminence over all his works, we must at all events allow it a very high elevation among them. It far exceeds the works of nature, and the administration of providence. It is, the new creation of the soul in the image of God. It is, on the part of the blessed Spirit, the exertion of a *holy* energy, and the production of a *holy* result. It is intimately connected with all the hopes and joys, the purity and devotedness, the redemp-

tion and glorification of the soul on which he acts. Out of the depths of corruption and iniquity, it prepares materials for a holy edifice, a temple of the living God, a monument of grace, to adorn eternally his palace in the skies. In whatever light we regard the conversion of a sinner, therefore, we cannot for a moment imagine that such a work will voluntarily be abandoned by its author. O no! sooner should creation itself be forsaken, and the course of providence be confounded, than the influences which turn a sinner to God fail of their intended issue.

3. Further confirmation of this sentiment might be derived from the *gracious* character of the work of conversion. It is undertaken, not merely for the glory of its author, but also for the happiness of its subject. It is represented as arising from the grace or love of God towards the sinner, and not merely so, but from rich and abundant grace. That is to say, in undertaking the conversion of a sinner, the blessed Spirit means to do him a favour, and a favour of unspeakable magnitude and excellency.—Now there is plainly no way of realizing this representation, but by the work of conversion being *completed*. If it be begun and not completed, if the influences of the Spirit be withdrawn and the sinner be left in his sins, he may be treated justly—nay, in a general view of his condition, he may be treated even mercifully: but it is plain that he does not receive that particular favour which consists in an actual conversion to God, and an intention to

communicate which, appeared to be announced by the exertion of some incipient influences conducive to this end. It can hardly be conceived that the blessed Spirit would commence the work of conversion without an intention to complete it, or without an exercise of that deep and tender benevolence from which it is declared to spring; but an incomplete conversion, which is in fact no conversion at all, is no exercise of grace at all, since it makes no change for the better, whether conditional or actual, in the state of the sinner himself. To be an exercise of grace, conversion must be not only begun but finished. We therefore conclude that, where it is begun, it will be finished; because it is incredible that the Holy Spirit would represent his proceedings in a light in which they cannot justly be regarded.

4. To add but one more consideration, we may advert to the *connexion subsisting between the work of the Spirit, and the work and glory of Christ.* It is not only for his own sake, nor for the sake of the sinner himself, that the Holy Spirit undertakes the work of conversion: it is pre-eminently for *Christ's sake;* through the influence of his death, and for the promotion of his glory. Sinners are to be turned to God because Christ died for them, and in order that Christ may be glorified in them. Nothing can be conceived more powerfully to operate on the Spirit himself than such an influence as this. Certainly, if any object can do so, this will call forth his utmost energies and most persevering

efforts. Will he ever relinquish a design which he undertakes out of love to the eternal Son of God, and the accomplishment of which is essential to the glory that shall recompense him for his sufferings? Impossible! It is impossible, then, that he should relinquish the conversion of a sinner; having once commenced it, he will assuredly carry it on to perfection.

The reasoning which has been here pursued might be carried much further; but sufficient has been said, perhaps, to show the grounds on which the sentiment of the certain efficacy of the Spirit's influence in conversion rests. If it should be observed that we have not, as in the former chapter, adduced individual texts of scripture, it will yet be admitted that our whole argument has proceeded strictly on scriptural grounds, which are of course of the same authority and conclusiveness as express testimonies of the divine word. But suppose we inquire, in passing, why it is that express testimonies on this point are not so abundant in holy writ as on some others. The reason plainly is, that it never seems to have admitted of the possibility of a doubt. Whether God, having converted a sinner, would carry on the work of grace to the end of life, *might* have been doubted; and therefore it is expressly declared that he will: Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." But whether, having put forth his power for the conversion of a sinner, that

object shall be accomplished, is a point on which the scripture bears no express testimony, except that which is involved in the declaration that he is GOD ALMIGHTY.

Upon what ground, indeed, it may well be asked, has it ever been imagined that the contrary could occur? We believe we are correct in saying that it is upon no other than the supposed necessity, on the part of the divine Being, of a deference to the will of man. A man must not be converted *against his will!* To speak of the grace of God, or the influence of the Spirit, as *irresistible*, destroys free agency! We care not about *the word irresistible*, which, if employed in this reference at all, means only, as we have said above, *certainly efficacious:* but it must be manifest, we should imagine, out of what a confusion of ideas this objection arises, since conversion is not the turning of *a man without his will* to God, but of *a man by his will*. It is a change of his will itself. It is *making himself willing*, which, we suppose, is neither against his will, nor destructive of free agency. It is, at the same time, plain enough, that if the influence employed in conversion were such as left the ultimate decision to a corrupt and carnal heart, the work would never be accomplished at all.

The author is aware that the Holy Spirit has been supposed to exert upon the minds of sinners some influences which are called *common*, in contradistinction from those *special* ones which issue in conversion. He doubts whether any such influ-

ences are exercised; but, at all events, as they are not conceived to be designed for the conversion of a sinner, they do not affect the bearing of the present argument.

What has hitherto been advanced may be thus briefly summed up. The influence of the Holy Spirit is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY to conversion, and CERTAINLY EFFECTUAL to it. These are sentiments of great glory and deep importance. May God impress them deeply on the heart of the writer, and withhold him from writing a word, or entertaining a thought, inconsistent with their truth, or calculated to obscure their excellency!

PART II.

The work of the Holy Spirit in conversion, considered in relation to the condition of man.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is, as we have just seen, of high importance, nay, of absolute necessity, to the conversion of a sinner. Now this fact obviously indicates a corresponding feature in the condition of mankind. There must be some cause for this necessity, some reason why men do not turn to God without heavenly aid. What is this cause? Is it external or internal; without man, or within him? Is it voluntary, or involuntary? Does it criminate man, or excuse him?

Few inquiries can be more important than these; a clear answer to them being absolutely necessary to a just knowledge of the condition of our nature, and a satisfactory view of the bearings of the glorious dispensation, that, namely, of the Holy Spirit, to which our attention is directed.

The uniformity of the fact in all circumstances, that men do not turn to God of themselves, as well as the decisive testimony of holy writ, assures us that the cause sought for is to be found in their own bosom. Whatever of an external kind may assume the aspect, or bear the name, of an hinderance to

conversion, none of these things, nor any combination of them, can be regarded as constituting the grand impediment. In truth, these all derive their influence from the state of mind on which they act, irrespectively of which they are utterly powerless; and were this right, nothing would hinder man from turning to God. The main and only effectual obstruction is within his own breast.

This obstruction to conversion is well known by the general designation of the corruption or depravity of man's nature. But when we have said this, we have gained no information respecting its precise character; we have merely given it a name, and have still to inquire what may be intended by it. On the specific nature of that fact in our fallen condition which occasions the necessity for the Spirit's interposition, an important diversity of opinion exists, which may be stated as follows.

On the one hand it has been maintained that the necessity of divine influence argues, on the part of man, a want of POWER to turn to God; and on the other it has been conceived that the obstacle is not a want of power, but a want of DISPOSITION. In reference to the actual want of right disposition in mankind, both these classes of divines are agreed, the difference between them relating simply to one of two questions: First, *whether a want of disposition is the whole hinderance to conversion, or whether there be not also a want of power;* or Secondly, *whether a want of power is not identical with, or constituted by, a want of disposition.*

Those who affirm that power is wanting, chiefly argue either from express words of scripture, which declares (to take one passage for an example) that no man *can* come unto Christ except the Father draw him; or from the nature of the case, since, if man had power to turn to God of himself, the Holy Spirit could not be necessary for this purpose.—Those who maintain that power is not wanting (and the writer is among them) do not shrink from fully meeting these arguments, with others which will be hereafter noticed on the same side; while their proofs are brought likewise from the language of scripture, as well as from an examination of the structure of the human mind, and of the actual operation of the Spirit, from the just responsibility of man, from the gracious and sovereign character of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and from the pre-eminent tendency of the sentiment they advocate, at once to humble the sinner and give glory to God.

Such is a bird's-eye view of the field of inquiry, which lies before us: a field which comprehends certainly a number of topics most interesting in themselves, and bearing powerfully on many points both of doctrine, experience, and practice. The writer would feel little pleasure in pursuing his task, if he thought it would be barren of spiritual profit; but as he is persuaded this will be by no means necessarily the case, so he implores for himself and his reader the gracious unction, beneath which alone true wisdom is either acquired or increased.

Before entering directly into the discussion, the

reader's patient attention is requested to some important preliminary matter, relating generally to the structure and operations of the human mind, and the import of the terms in which we describe them.

CHAP. I.

Of the Structure and Operation of the Human Mind.

If we were examining the movements of a machine, and seeking to understand the causes by which they were either accelerated or impeded, we should probably deem it necessary in the first instance to gain some competent knowledge of the nature of the machine itself; or if we should heedlessly have commenced our investigation without such a preliminary measure, perplexities and embarrassments would speedily convince us of its necessity. It is thus with the inquiry now before us. We wish to solve problems respecting the state and operations of the mind under particular circumstances, namely, under the prevalence of depravity, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Is it not, therefore, not only desirable, but necessary, previously to acquire a proper view both of the structure of the mind itself, and of its general mode of operation? Should we be ignorant of these, or inaccurately in-

formed, how can we proceed with satisfaction, or conclude with confidence, respecting the questions immediately before us? Upon these subjects, therefore, we shall here enter, briefly, and with the utmost attainable simplicity. We trust that the explanations which may be given will be found neither difficult nor uninteresting; but if in any measure they should be so, let it be remembered that what is important should never be considered too uninteresting to be attended to, nor too difficult to be achieved. In fact, the topics on which we are about to enter are not difficult, and they can appear to be so only because to some readers they may be new. They ought not, however to be mysterious, to any person, and the author hopes they will not be so to any of his readers after the perusal of the following pages.

I. It has been customary to speak of the *Powers* or *Faculties* of the mind, and doubtless it is both necessary and just to use this phraseology; yet it should be remembered that, however familiarly we may speak of them, they are things of which, in their own nature, we know absolutely nothing. The whole that is submitted to our investigation is comprehended in the various modes of human *action*, external and internal. From the fact that certain modes of action occur, we infer that there exist faculties or powers of performing such actions. This conclusion is unquestionably drawn with sufficient justice, inasmuch as we can conceive of no effect without a proportionate and corresponding

cause; but still it is important to observe, that it is only by such an inference we arrive at the knowledge even of the existence of our mental faculties. It follows, therefore, that the proper method of investigating the mind of man is to begin, not with his faculties, but with his actions. Observe what he does, and you will then learn what are his powers. Our facilities for such an employment can scarcely be considered as less than ample. In how many forms is man continually acting within our observation; while, in truth, the whole mystery is exhibited in our own breasts, and the knowledge of man is nothing more than the knowledge of ourselves.

Let us then imagine one of our species to be before us; or rather let us turn our eyes inward, and mark what takes place there. If I do this, I find that I am PERCEIVING various objects, with their apparent properties; such as the fields in their summer beauty, my children in their early loveliness, with a variety of others, which may either be presented to me by the senses, or arise from recollection or reflection. Besides this, perhaps, I find that I am also in a state of FEELING; experiencing either hope or fear, desire or aversion, pleasure or pain, or feeling of some other kind, in various degrees, or with various modifications. I may yet further find myself upon some occasions, perhaps after considering various motives or modes of action, ultimately DETERMINING; as either to attend to some subject, to take some step, or to enter on some pursuit; after which I proceed TO ACT. These observations will

be sufficient for the present. Here are matters of fact. We *perceive*, we *feel*, we *determine;* and upon the supposition that these processes argue the existence of corresponding faculties, we go on to say, that man possesses one faculty of perceiving, another of feeling, and a third of determining. The faculty of perceiving, we may call the UNDERSTANDING; that of feeling, the HEART; and that of determining, the WILL. These three faculties are principally concerned in all human actions.

II. We may now look at each of them a little more closely.

1. By the UNDERSTANDING, or the faculty of perceiving, we apprehend, according to its apparent nature, and so far as it is suited to our apprehension, whatever object is presented to the mind. Here it is material to remember, that there are many ways by which objects may be so presented. The most obvious is the eye, which certainly makes us acquainted with things with much more vividness and accuracy than any other organ; but it is clearly not the only channel of access to the mind, distinct perceptions being produced in it by impressions on the ear, and every other corporeal sense. In addition to this, the mind is accessible to communication from some beings, (*one*, at least, if no more) without the intervention of the senses at all. It is important to observe, also, that objects may be presented to the mind out of its own stores, either as brought out of the treasures of memory, or as resulting from the exercise of its own thoughts. A very

important portion of these last consist in those judgments respecting right and wrong, of which we shall hereafter speak.

Now, whatever object,—using this word in a sense sufficiently large to comprehend a sentiment, or any thing else which may be perceived by the mind,—whatever object is in any way intelligibly presented to the mind, we perceive it *inevitably*. It is no matter of choice with us whether we will preceive it or not. If I look on the sky or hear a bell, or am informed of an event, or recollect an interview, it does not lie with me to perceive or not to perceive these things respectively. I do perceive them, and that in a manner altogether involuntary and beyond my control.

It is to be added, that whatever is presented to the mind is perceived *according to its apparent nature and properties*. Of the real nature of things we know little, if any thing; we have to do with their apparent properties only, and in perfect accordance with these is every object apprehended by the mind, if it is in a sane state.

2. By the HEART, or faculty of feeling, we become subject to the excitement of desire, aversion, hatred, love, and numerous other affections of the mind. These affections must be considered as *not existing of themselves*, or without a cause. They have always some object. We are never in a state of desire without desiring something; or of sorrow, without something for which we are sorry; excepting indeed in cases of disease, which, of course, are

withdrawn from the scope of our present inquiry: in a sound state, and in its healthy exercise, no feelings exist in the mind, unless excited by some object. Until excited in some respect, it is altogether tranquil.

The next material observation is, that our feelings, when excited, *correspond with the apprehended nature of the object which has excited them;* as fear with the perception of danger, or hope with the prospect of advantage. It is impossible to conceive that there should be any variation from this rule. If ever what I regard as adapted to engage my love inspires me with aversion, I shall not be of sound mind: as long as I am so, my feelings must have an exact correspondence with the apprehended nature of the objects which have awakened them.

All objects have not an equal adaptation to excite our feelings, nor the same objects equal efficacy in all circumstances. But all objects which are adapted to move our feelings at all, have a tendency to do so *independently of our choice.* A sight of danger, for example, does not appeal to us, as it were in the way of interrogation,—whether we will be afraid or not; but the perception of it tends directly to inspire fear, whether we will or not, and it will certainly do so, unless its influence be counteracted by some other means. It is, in truth, a general maxim, that every object presented to the mind, having any adaptation to move the feelings, produces *infallibly* an excitement of them corresponding with its apprehended nature, unless such an effect is prevent-

ed by the operation of a counteracting cause. It follows, also, that our immediate feelings are in many cases involuntary; they are so in all cases, indeed, in which they are not affected by some voluntary productive or modifying influence.

3. By the WILL, or faculty of determining, we form resolutions respecting what we will, or will not, be or do. This is clearly not to be understood as referring to our outward conduct alone. Whether we will attend to any given subject, or agree to a certain proposal, and many things more which are wrought entirely within the bosom, are subject to our determination; as also, in truth, is what we shall be, and what we shall feel, as far as these are dependent upon the use of means put into our power.

The will *does not act of itself*, nor indeed can we conceive of such a thing. We never make any determination without having a perception of the case respecting which we have to determine, nor without being moved by something so perceived to the particular determination itself. Determination is neither more nor less than the answer to a question,—shall I, or shall I not?—and cannot be conceived of apart from circumstances which give rise to such an interrogatory. If there is no question, there is nothing to be determined; and if there is nothing to be determined, no determination can exist. Neither can any determination be formed, without something in the case perceived to move us to it. In a general way it is perfectly obvious that our determinations do arise from such moving causes. When we say,

I will do this, or I will not do that, it is because we see something either attractive or repulsive in the cases respectively; and if we examine, we shall find that this is uniformly the case: the rule has, and can have, no exception. It is of the nature of a rational creature to determine according to apparent reasons; in whatever case a determination may be otherwise formed, if such ever were or can be, it can scarcely indicate less than derangement, if not rather a subversion of the constitution of the mind.

We go on to observe, that as we never come to any determination without a moving cause, so every cause acts, *according to its apparent force*, and tends to the production of a corresponding result, by virtue of our intelligent constitution, and quite *independently of our choice*. If, for example, I see danger, and the sight moves me to determine upon avoiding it, it tends to bring me to this determination by its own force as perceived by me, whether I am willing to be so moved or not. My coming to this resolution may be hindered by the influence of other considerations, such as the advantage I may derive, or the good I may do, by braving the peril; but my being led towards such a resolution is involuntary still; and each of these modifying considerations also has a tendency to act upon me, whether I will or not, according to its nature and force as perceived by me.

Determinations, therefore, considered as acts of the will, *do not, in any case, originate with the will*

itself. This faculty never acts, it was not intended to act, it is not capable of acting, of its own accord. It may be moved, but it cannot move of itself. It will answer to the slightest touch, but is itself absolutely inert; like the gunpowder, which nevertheless the smallest spark inflames. The acts of the will not originating with the will itself, but being produced by objects perceived, are infallibly and inevitably such as our perceptions are of the objects which produce them. They are not voluntary.

In connexion with this statement, and as adapted to remove any appearance of paradox which may attach to it, it may be important to observe, that the cases are very different *when we speak of man as a whole*, and *of his faculties apart*. *Man* is a voluntary agent. Both his actions and character originate with himself. He is, and does, what he chooses or determines to do and to be. *His* determinations are voluntary, that is, they arise out of his own feelings; and in this self-origination the voluntary nature of character and actions consists. But, *taking the faculties of man apart*, such language is totally inapplicable. He has no choice whether they shall act or not. They are made to act when acted upon, and precisely as they are acted upon; and however they may give rise to voluntary action in man, there is nothing voluntary in their own. Our faculties have no choice whether they will act or not. How should they? The very notion is absurd. They are of the nature of mechanism; adapted to be acted

upon, then to act, and to propagate their action, until it produces something by combination totally different from the character of either.

Hence it may be seen how untenable the ground is which has been so hardly fought, namely, that the *will* is, or ought to be *free*. Doubtless *man* ought to be *free*, and we believe that he is so, however fallen and corrupt. But, without any reference either to the primitive or the degenerate state of man, the idea of *freedom* is totally inapplicable to the *will*, as a part of our intelligent constitution. *The will having no power of choice, or self-movement, it cannot be either free or bound.* From its nature it cannot act until it is acted upon; and if it does not act as it is acted upon, the mind is no longer sane.

III. Having taken this brief view of the faculties of man separately, let us now consider them in their relation to each other, and in reference to the result of their combined operation.

The mental processes are often so rapid that it is not easy to analyze them, or even to believe them capable of analysis. We shall find, nevertheless, that every one of our actions engages all the powers of which we have spoken, and in a uniform and beautiful order. If we take a journey, it is because we have determined to take it; here is the action of the will. Something moved us to this determination; perhaps it was the hope of pleasure, or a sense of duty; here is an excitement of the feelings, or the action of the heart. But what excited these

feelings? Obviously the perception of the duty or the pleasure to which they referred; here then, lastly, is the action of the understanding. Such is the process which is carried on continually. First, objects are perceived by us; next our feelings are excited according to the apprehended nature of the objects perceived; then a determination is formed in accordance with the whole effect produced upon the feelings; and finally action is induced, in conformity, with this determination and all that has preceded it. Viewing the mind in itself, therefore, apart from all modifying or disturbing influences, we have a faculty of perception, apprehending whatever is fitted to its powers, and transmitting these apprehensions as it were to an inner chamber, the heart, where lie a thousand capabilities of feeling, all ready to be inflamed by whatever may be adapted to them respectively; while these, again, by their simple or combined energies, lead to determination, and this ultimately to action.

The mechanism is extremely simple, yet most beautiful and efficacious; and, as might be expected from the peculiarity of its character, it produces a result worthy of the closest investigation. This result is not merely an external action. Various internal acts and exercises, or permanent states of mind, arise from it too; as, for example, an effort of thought, or an endeavour to cherish, to regulate, or to suppress any particular feeling. But whatever action, external or internal, or whatever feeling, permanent or transient, may be thus produced, it is

evident it will have some striking and important properties.

First, It will be INTELLIGENT. Every thing will be done for some known or knowable reason; since, according to the constitution of the mind, neither can feeling be excited, nor a determination formed, but under the influence of objects perceived by the understanding. In this respect it differs widely from organic action, such as that of vegetable or animal bodies, which act by the force of physical and not of intelligent causes.

Secondly, It will be VOLUNTARY. Every thing will be done under the impulse of the agent himself, and no other; since objects presented to the mind operate primarily to the excitement of his own feelings, and these exclusively are the impulses of his actions. This is the true and proper idea of voluntary action—action resulting from our own feelings; and such is our mental mechanism fitted to produce. In this respect again it differs widely from organic action, which is commenced and carried on by external impulse alone.

Thirdly, It will CORRESPOND WITH THE APPARENT NATURE OF THINGS. Every action being excited by objects perceived, it plainly follows that all our actions will be conformable to our perceptions, or to the nature of things as perceived by us: but every sound mind perceives objects according to their apparent nature; whence it follows also, that, if no disturbing influences interfere, our actions will strictly accord with the apparent nature of things,

as truly as the rays of light are reflected from a mirror, or the face of the sky from an unruffled sea.

IV. In these observations we are of course to be considered as confining our view to the nature of the mind itself, and the manner in which it would operate by virtue of its constitution simply, apart from any disturbing causes. At the existence of such causes we have already cursorily hinted, and it will now be necessary more particularly to advert to them. We know that, in point of fact, the conduct of men does not always accord with the nature of things as it is most obviously to be apprehended, and as it is in reality apprehended by them. Besides which, it may well seem strange that a being of such excellence as man, and one too upon whose conduct such awful issues depend, should be laid so entirely open to the influence of things about him or within him, that every thing should thus tend to excite his feelings, and inspire determination, and lead to action, by its own force, whether he will or not. If he has no choice what he shall perceive, or what he shall feel, or what he shall determine, is he not exposed, without defence, to impressions of every kind, like chaff before the wind, or like a feather on the ocean, the helpless victim of his circumstances?

We might here say, that if this were actually the case, which, as we shall presently see, it is not, the actions of men would still be strictly voluntary; that term denoting simply those actions which result from our own feelings, as distinguished from every

other impelling cause. But we rather go on to observe, that man is endowed with a POWER OF SELF-REGULATION AND CONTROL, the nature and influence of which it is important that we should rightly estimate. We all know that, upon various occasions, we not merely apprehend the apparent properties of things, but that we dwell upon them with more or less force, and for a longer or shorter period; we pay them, in a word, more or less ATTENTION. We know also the result of this. Some thoughts we immediately banish from our minds, and they are to us as though they had never been; others we dwell upon intensely, and they produce a deep impression on our feelings. Now the fact is, that the actual influence which an object presented to the mind will have upon us, is not to be measured simply by its own nature and force, but is compounded of two elements; the first being its real adaptation to move us, and the second the intensity with which we contemplate it. A great truth, if we give it little attention, will produce but a small effect; while, if we give them much, we may be deeply wrought upon by trifles.

Whether this power of giving more or less attention may be properly called a distinct faculty of the mind, as by philosophers of great eminence it has been,* is of comparatively little consequence: it is plainly a very influential mode of mental operations and the most important inquiry is, How is it brought

*See, especially, Professor Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

into action? In the exercise of attention are we voluntary or involuntary? Are we impelled by our own feelings, or by other causes? We are impelled partly, and in various cases, by both. Some pieces of intelligence, for example, are so touching that they fix our attention instantly, and rivet it in defiance of ourselves; while there are subjects, on the other hand, to which if we attend, it is under a sense of duty, or perhaps of interest; that is to say, it is under the impulse of our own feelings. Attention has in part, therefore, *a voluntary character*. We employ it when we please, and to what extent we please. And since the influence of whatever is presented to the mind may be thus regulated, may be almost annihilated on the one hand, and greatly strengthened on the other, it is plain that we have in our own hands the control of our feelings, actions, and character. Every man is thus put in possession of the key of his own heart, and is enabled to render it a sanctuary for the entertainment of select objects, inviolable, to a great extent, by whatever he may choose to exclude. If we can select the objects which shall occupy the understanding, we can in like manner select those which shall affect the heart, since none can affect the heart but those which occupy the understanding: if we can choose what topics shall impress the heart, we can choose what the state of the heart shall be, since it always corresponds with the topics which bear upon it: and if we can choose what the state of the heart shall be, we can equally fix our determination

and our conduct, since they have an exact conformity with the state of the heart.

It is necessary here to observe a distinction between the subordinate and transient affections of the heart, and its habitually prevailing state. Affections of the former kind are often produced instantaneously, and for the moment uncontrollably, as by tidings of the death of a friend; the latter is the result of cherished and perhaps long continued contemplation of objects of a particular class. Such contemplation must inevitably form the habitually prevalent state of mind, and thus in point of fact it is always formed: so the miser pores over his gold, the imagination of the rake riots in sensual pleasure, the man of science has his thoughts in his lore, and the christian in heaven. When we say that the constitution of man gives him a power of self-control, we refer to *the prevalent and habitual state of his heart*. He can make it what he pleases, let him only fix his thoughts with corresponding intensity on congenial topics. And thus has he also an ultimate power over those violent, and at the moment irresistible emotions, to which he is subject; because the lasting influence of the objects which produced them may be modified by that of other considerations selected for this end.

If the faculty of Attention (to use this phraseology) shews us how man may be and do what he pleases, it will equally explain to us why, in so many instances, he is not what the state of things around him is adapted to make him; why his con-

duct is so often at variance both with his interest and his duty. This melancholy result arises from *inattention* to the more serious objects set before him. He sees them, but does not regard them. The perception of them is momentary; they are instantly forgotten, and therefore wholly without influence. It matters not how momentous such things may be in themselves, nor how often they may be exhibited and perceived; if no attention be paid to them, or if the attention they are adapted to excite be withheld, they can exert no power. Trifles lighter than air will outweigh the most solemn topics, if the former be intently dwelt upon, and the latter banished from the thoughts.

To this it may be added that inattention is *the only method by which things fail to act upon us according to their apparent nature.* As it is only by being presented to the understanding, and by engaging our attention, that objects have power of acting upon us at all, so when attention is engaged their proportionate influence is certain and infallible. As no man can live seriously who does not habitually think of serious things, so no man can live in levity who does. The fixing of the attention determines the character and conduct with irresistible power, and infallible certainty.

Before we quit the subject of Attention, it will be proper to advert to the connexion between this exercise of the understanding, and the state of the heart. Some things instantly engage more attention than others; why is this? To some things I

purposely pay more attention than to others; and why is this? It is plainly *because my feelings are more excited towards one object than another.* And this is equally the case, whether attention be voluntary or involuntary; whether an object fixes my attention by its immediate interest, as tidings of the death of a friend; or whether it engages my attention by my own purpose and effort, as under a sense of duty; a sense of duty being as truly a feeling, or state of the heart, as a sense of pleasure or of grief. Either way feeling is excited, and proportionate to its excitement is the attention engaged.

It is material to remember that attention is *voluntary only in part, and in some cases.* In others it is altogether involuntary, as when arising from the influence of objects which powerfully interest the feelings. Here no purpose is formed to attend to them; but the attention may be even riveted for a time, in defiance of our most strenuous efforts. It is important to bear this in mind, because it shows how attention may be awakened in the first instance, without any option of ours, and so become the impulse of further feeling, or the object of designed regulation.

V. As far as we have hitherto regarded the structure and operation of the mind, we have found it adapted to produce a species of action and feeling, which is intelligent, voluntary, and accordant with the apparent nature of things. We have found also that man has a power of regulating his feelings and conduct as he pleases, whether

according to the apparent nature of things or not; inasmuch as the power of giving attention to things as he pleases modifies the influence they are adapted to exert, and virtually alters their properties *as apparent to him*. But there is yet a further quality of our actions, to which we must now advert. Man is capable of doing RIGHT or WRONG; or, which is the same thing, of being right or wrong in what he does. This cannot be said of the brute creation, as for example, of a lion or a bear, which, though they may revel in the blood of other beasts, or even in that of man, are charged with no crime: yet if a man were to do the same with his fellow-man, we should hold him subject to blame. What is the ground of this difference?

It is simply this. The mind of man is *adapted to the perception of moral truths*, that is, of the good or evil properties of actions. He is capable of understanding that some things are wrong, and others right. Sometimes he infers this for himself, sometimes he imbibes it from others, in both cases, perhaps, with considerable inaccuracy; but let this be as it may, the ideas thus acquired are treasured up in the memory, and *constantly brought into use*, in the way of forming a judgment both of others and ourselves. This perception of moral qualities, and even the formation of moral judgments, is *no way dependent upon our choice*. We do it whether we will or not, and with irresistible force, though the degree of attention we choose to give to the process may vary. This capacity of estimating

actions according to a scale of good or evil, and this propensity in every case so to estimate them, constitute together what is called the CONSCIENCE of man, which is no other than the understanding in this particular aspect and occupation.

Hence it is manifest how, in any voluntary action, a man may be right or wrong. While he is contemplating it, and before he has determined respecting it, his own mind passes a judgment upon it, and pronounces it to be either one or the other. If he then does it, knowing it to be wrong, he is plainly wrong in doing it. So on the contrary, if his conscience testifies it is right, he is not wrong in that respect; though, if the action be not right in itself, he still may be wrong in not having taken greater pains to ascertain its character.

A similar illustration may be applied to the state of the heart, which a man's conscience equally indicates to be right or wrong, and which, like his outward conduct, he has (as we have just seen) a provision for regulating according to his pleasure. Whatever emotions the objects he perceives may excite, a judgment is instantly passed upon them, with more or less accuracy expressing their character; and if he finds improper affections excited, the suppression or the indulgence of them constitutes respectively his right or wrong conduct in such a case.

The additional mechanism by which an agent, already intelligent and voluntary, comes to be also right or wrong, is, at once, simple and efficacious.

We are so constituted to know good from evil, and irresistibly to apply our knowledge; in acting according to our knowledge, our rectitude, as far as we now speak of it, consists; and hence, with the same limitations, we are right in doing what we believe to be right, and wrong in doing what we believe to be wrong.

But we have to go a step further. To right conduct we uniformly attach *approbation*, and *blame* to that which is wrong. We never doubt the propriety of this in ordinary affairs, and may think it strange to inquire into the grounds of this connexion: yet, as we shall see hereafter, it is important that we should do so. The case is this. We look upon the conduct of men in a thousand instances, and, if we see nothing that strikes us as either right or wrong, we attach to them neither praise nor blame; but the moment we see any thing right, we approve of it, or any thing wrong, we condemn. Why should this feature of men's conduct, and only this, induce so peculiar and decisive a feeling? Why am I to be any more praised for acting according to my knowledge of right, than according to a perception of sweetness? Or why blamed any more for the indulgence of a feeling that was wrong, than for the admiration of what was deformed?

It has been common to rest the answer to this question on the force of conscience, which certainly testifies to every man that, whereinsoever he has been right or wrong, he is deserving of praise or blame accordingly; but if this testimony of our

conscience is true, there must be a ground or reason of its truth, and this reason it is, for several causes, important to discern. It will add, for example, great force to the testimony of conscience itself; it will tend to check the efforts, and to impede the success, of men who wish to rid themselves of its unwelcome admonitions by subtile but fallacious arguments; and, above all, it will tend to show the justice and the glory of our Maker's ways. We put the case, therefore, we hope fairly; and are quite fairly willing to say, if the testimony of our conscience be unreasonable or untrue; let it be rectified.

Our answer to the inquiry is this. Our perceptions of right and wrong have a very peculiar power. And this in two respects:—in the first place, *they make an immediate and inevitable appeal to our choice.* We may see many things, and yet see nothing that we either like or dislike; but the moment we perceive any thing to be right or wrong, that state of indifference ceases, and we instantly approve or disapprove. So with respect to our own conduct.—Innumerable actions might be proposed to us, not one of which we should care to adopt or to decline; but no action could appear to us to be right or wrong without our immediately being led towards a corresponding purpose, either that we would or would not do it. Respecting objects perceived as right or wrong, therefore, our ultimate decision is never involuntary; instantly, and from the very nature of these perceptions, they appeal to us for deliberate

approbation or disapprobation, adoption or rejection, and these are voluntary exercises or states of the mind.

In the second place, perceptions of right and wrong *enter the mind with a force imperative and supreme.* They bring with them an immediate *sense of obligation.* Other things may be agreeable or disagreeable; I may like them or dislike them, and I may pursue or avoid them, as I please: but with respect to things right or wrong, the case is altogether different. Here is something that I *ought* to love, that I *ought* to do; nay, I must do it, or else I shall be wrong; it is binding upon me, nor have I any liberty to decline or to evade it. Now we are so constituted that this sense of obligation always accompanies the perception of any action as right; nor can these two things, by any possibility, be rent asunder. In addition to this, the sense of obligation is *the most powerful of all the feelings of which we are susceptible.* We may be attracted by pleasure, by gain, and by various other aspects of things, but none of these do we feel it *binding* to pursue; we may relinquish them if we please; but what we feel to be right, we feel it also to be imperative—it may not be left undone: so, on the other hand, we may be deterred by danger, by reproach, and by nameless other unpleasing aspects of things, yet, if we choose, we may encounter them; but whenever we discover a thing to be wrong, we feel an absolute prohibition of it—it may not be done. The sense of of obligation, therefore, being by far the most power-

ful of all the feelings of which we are susceptible, it may be expected to take the lead of them all, and in the course of nature, and by its own force, *it will infallibly do so*, unless it is prevented by the interference of some other cause. To this sensibility of obligation all perceptions of right and wrong immediately appeal: an actual sense of obligation is instantly excited by them; and as this is the strongest of all our feelings, it should, of course, instantly prevail. If we suppose a case in which it does not prevail, let us ask why it does not? There is nothing capable of interfering with it but some other feeling, either previously existing, or at the same moment excited in the heart. If any such feeling were of superior, or even of equal power, then we might account for the obstruction without imputing blame to the agent; it would rather be referred to his constitution; but as this is not the case, the sense of obligation being the most powerful of all our feelings, here is a stronger feeling overcome by a weaker—the sense of obligation, for example, resisted by the love of pleasure. But how is it that the weaker prevails over the stronger, and that man does not act according to the tendency of his powers? It is plainly because he has been misapplying the voluntary part of them. At the same instant he had a call from duty and from pleasure; he felt that of duty to be the most forcible, yet he lent to it so dull an ear, and listened so keenly to the voice of pleasure, that the feebler inducements of the syren prevailed. By his lending a quicker ear to what he

knew to be the least forcible appeal, this deviation from rectitude has been produced; and for this he is held to be deserving of blame.

The argument thus far may be summed up as follows:—We receive moral perceptions, and apply these to our own conduct; each moral perception calls upon us instantly to choose, and creates a conscious obligation to choose aright; this is the most influential feeling we are capable of, and has nothing to oppose it but a variety of weaker ones; our Maker, therefore, expects that it should prevail; and if it does not, it will be only because, by means of attention or inattention which we know to be disproportionate to the respective objects, we give greater strength to the feebler cause. We wilfully originate the evil, and the whole blameworthiness of it deservedly falls upon ourselves.

That this natural imperativeness and supremacy of the sense of obligation is not only a reasonable foundation of praise and blame, but that also on which these are universally awarded, will readily appear from a reference to matters of common life. Suppose yourself a parent interrogating a child who has been disobedient. You ask him, "Why did you strike your brother?" "He provoked me." "But ought you to have yielded to the provocation?" "No." "Ought you not to have controlled your anger?" "Yes." "Then you have been very wrong, and I am displeased with you." Both parent and child feel this argument to be perfectly conclusive: but what is at the bottom of it? Plainly

this principle; that a sense of duty is, in its natural tendency, of greater power than any other feeling, and that, therefore, if other feelings are not controlled by it, it is not only a fault in itself, but *our* fault, inasmuch as it results from a wilful misapplication of our self-regulating powers. The same principle is at the foundation of all blame or praise.

If any person should be disposed to push the question a step further back, and to say, My conduct is produced by my feelings, and these are produced by the things presented to my mind, which I discern *involuntarily*, so that I *cannot help* feeling as I do, nor therefore acting as I do:—should a man say this, we meet him by admitting at once, if this statement is true, he is free from blame. Most certainly all ill-desert is to be traced back to the state of the heart, which is the sole impulse of action, and seat of character. Let a man only prove that he cannot help his feelings, and he will clear himself from all censure; since his heart and conduct in that case would but simply represent the objects he perceives, as the face of the ocean reflects the aspect of the sky. But this is far from being the fact. Suppose we take the case of a man already in a state of wrong feeling, as of ingratitude, for example; he is conceived to say that he cannot help it; but we ask, Has he come to this state of feeling without a consciously wrong use of his voluntary powers? He has surely at some time heard the admonition within him that he ought to

be thankful: what attention did he pay to it? Did he inquire whether he was duly thankful, or how his gratitude should be properly expressed? Or did he turn his attention to some other objects, and abandon the duty of gratitude to forgetfulness?—No doubt he has taken the latter course, thus *making himself unthankful when he could have helped it.*

We do not scruple to express our belief that in whatsoever instance or degree the state of heart may be wrong, it arises solely from a *wilful inattention to what would have influenced it aright.* If we had given as much attention to every topic as we perceived to be its due, and *then* our state of feeling had been wrong, it would have been hard to be found fault with; but if we have been less attentive to some of these topics than we know we ought to have been, and more attentive to others, by thus making a selection of the objects which shall operate upon us, we have moulded the state of our hearts according to our own choice, and are therefore justly responsible for its character. Whatever it may be, it is such as we have wilfully made it, by designedly dwelling on the topics under the influence of which it has been formed, to the exclusion of others which would have given it a different complexion.*

* The influence of attention in leading to what is voluntary in cases in which itself is involuntary, seems to facilitate our conception of the mode in which sin might come into existence in a holy being. Whatever interests the feelings tends to engage our attention, involuntarily, and therefore not sinfully; but, without care, it may be engaged unduly, or dis-

It may be said, perhaps, that this selection of topics by which a wrong state of mind is induced, may be made under the influence of feelings which had arisen *involuntarily*. Some of our feelings are doubtless involuntary; but it is to be observed that that *these immediately become subject to our moral judgment*, by which they are pronounced to be either right or wrong; and if wrong, then follows an instant sense of obligation to suppress or rectify them. This sense of duty we have already shown to be stronger than every other stimulus to the mind, so that there can be no excuse for the indulgence or continuance of a wrong feeling in the heart, nor any, therefore, for its further influence in engaging attention to improper objects. If a wrong feeling be instantly and perseveringly resisted, as we know it ought to be, it will lead to no evil.

If the objector should say—But, *feeling as I do*, I cannot act otherwise, since my feelings determine my conduct;—we allow it. But we reply, *You ought to feel otherwise;* and however far gone you

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proportionately: but disproportionate attention produces yet further disproportionate or improper feeling, and so commences the progress of sin. Our first parent, for example, saw that the tree was good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. This was true, nor was it wrong that it should be interesting to her; nor, being interesting, could it fail of engaging her attention in a measure. But her attention was engaged disproportionately, and she neglected other considerations: hence undue attention excited undue desire, and the indulgence of this desire was sin. Had it been as soon repelled as the voice of conscience pronounced it wrong, Eve had come unhurt from the power of the tempter.

may be in evil disposition, it needs, *even now*, nothing more than a due consideration of all the topics presented to you, to change your whole state of mind, and to produce within you a new heart and a right spirit.

For it should be observed, in conclusion, that God, in his infinite wisdom, has so arranged the circumstances in which we are placed, that *if a due regard be paid to* ALL *the objects presented to our understanding, the state of the heart will infallibly be right.* He has properly adapted the causes in operation to the nature upon which they were to operate, just as mechanical forces are proportioned to the machinery on which they are to act. Were this not the case, the whole world of morals would be thrown into disorder. To expect in us a right state of heart, when a due consideration of all things open to our observation was adapted to produce a wrong one, could not be otherwise than unreasonable; and it must be to the full as unreasonable to complain of such an expectation, when nothing more than a due consideration of known or discernible truths is requisite to its fulfilment. No further than we neglect such consideration does God condemn us; and in this respect surely we cannot pretend to justify ourselves.

The author should perhaps apologize for occupying his readers so long with topics which may perhaps truly be called metaphysical and abstruse; if, however, they have done him the kindness to accompany him attentively, he hopes they will not

fail to derive advantage which will amply recompense the labour. Should a single perusal not have enabled any one to master the subject, a second may do much to diminish the difficulty, or may probably overcome it altogether. We shall hereafter find how necessary a clear view of the elements of mental and moral philosophy is to a proper understanding of the questions to which we are approaching, and how decisively the principles which have been stated bear upon the chief points of the controversy. If as yet we seem to have made no progress, it is only because it is much better to determine our general principles, apart from any reference to the particular subject to which they are to be applied. A little further extension of the reader's patience is requested in the perusal of the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

Definition of Terms.

After the brief exhibition given in the former chapter of the elementary truths relating to the intelligent and moral nature of man, it may be important to put down a few definitions of terms relating to these subjects; both that we may the more clearly know what they mean when they occur, and that

precision in their use may aid the accuracy and conclusiveness of our reasonings. They will often, indeed, of themselves, decide points which have been long and laboriously disputed.

DISPOSITION, INCLINATION.

Terms of definite import are very desirable for the various states of feeling or excitements of the heart. The *habitually prevalent state of the heart* in any respect, we call the DISPOSITION of a man in that respect. It differs from INCLINATION, which is *not necessarily either habitual or prevailing;* it may be neither. It differs also from AFFECTIONS, which are *occasional, temporary, and subordinate* states of feeling. It differs, lastly, from WILL, which we conceive to mean either simply *a determination*, or the *faculty of determining* according to our feelings.

POWER, ABILITY.

Another term of great importance in the ensuing discussion is POWER or ABILITY; and it is highly material to have a settled opinion respecting it before we proceed further. When may it be said that a man has POWER to perform a given action? To this we answer, without hesitation, *when he possesses the means of doing so.* Let the definition be tried by examples. My power to walk consists in having the free use of my limbs; that is in possessing the means of walking. My power to think consists in having the use of the same understanding; that is

in possessing the means of thinking. My power to pay my debts consists in having sufficient property for this purpose; that is, in possessing the means of paying them. My power to be sorrowful consists in having a heart susceptible of being affected by afflictive considerations; that is, in possessing the means of being sorrowful.

Is any thing else necessary to constitute power besides the possession of means? and if so what is it? This question is put the more pointedly, because we shall have proceeded but a very few steps before the definition of power above given will be objected to, and something else will be deemed essential to it; we beg to suggest, however, that if any objection be made, it should be made now, and not be brought out just when and where the pressure of the argument may be most severely felt, and when it can scarcely fail to have the appearance and effect of an evasion. What more, we again ask, is necessary to constitute power, than the possession of means?

Is our having a disposition towards any action essential to our having power to perform it? This is the important question with which we shall find ourselves involved hereafter, and which it will be much better to settle now; without asking which side of the argument it will favor. *We conceive that it is not.*

Suppose a case for illustration. A man is in full health, at perfect liberty, and with employment before him, but he is idle; has he power to work?

Another has sufficient money to satisfy his creditors, but he is fond of gaming, and has no disposition to meet them; has he power to pay his debts? A rich man is importuned by a sufferer, but he is covetous: has he the power to relieve the distress? In all those cases we conceive an affirmative answer would be immediately returned; yet they are cases in which *disposition is wanting;* and they lead to the conclusion, therefore, that disposition is *not* necessary to power.

Or conceive it to be granted, for the sake of argument, that disposition *is* essential to power. Then it will follow that, *what a man is not disposed to do, he has no power to do.* Though a man be rolling in wealth, a love of dissipation destroys his power to pay his debts; and though he be in full vigor, idleness annihilates his power to work; and it is only necessary to go great lengths in these bad dispositions, to authorise one to say, I am totally unable either to pay your bills, or to labor for my bread.—A person who should use such language as this would be deemed a fit inmate for a lunatic asylum. Nothing is more common, and few things are more important, than the distinction between power and inclination. *You can but you will not*, is language almost incessantly used, and the distinction on which it is founded is the basis of some very important transactions; as when an idle fellow is sent to the tread-mill, or an able but reluctant debtor to the prison.

To say that disposition is essential to power, at-

taches a very extraordinary limitation to the idea of power itself. I have no power, I am told, to do any thing that I am not disposed to do, yet there are an immense number of things which I am disposed not to do, which I have been used to think I could do. As, for instance, I am surrounded by several hundred places, and am disposed not to go to any of them. But have I, therefore, no power to go to any of them? In that case I must be considered as fixed, literally like a rock, to my position, till I am disposed to move, with which disposition to move, it appears, my power of moving is identical. On the contrary, the obvious fact is, that we have power to do many things, *whether we are disposed to do them or not*. The things are but few in comparison which we are disposed to do, and these are selected at our pleasure out of the much larger number which we have power to perform. The state of the disposition has not the slighest connexion with the question of power.

It cannot but seem strange that such an idea as we have been noticing should ever have been entertained; but it has apparently arisen from an erroneous view of the fact that *a disposition to act is necessary to the actual performance of an action*, whence it has been hastily concluded to be necessary also to the *power* of performing it. Nothing certainly can be more obvious than that a voluntary being *will never* act further than he feels a disposition to do so. Though I may take a journey whenever I please, so long as I am determined not to do

so, it is quite certain that I shall not; yet one would think it equally plain, that my power of doing it remains unimpaired. To imagine that whatever is necessary to the *actual performance* of any thing is also necessary to the *power of performing* it, is to overlook the difference that exists between power and performance, which, being different in themselves, do not necessarily imply the same requisites. The mistake has sometimes been confirmed by not properly interpreting a form of speech which is frequently employed in this connexion. We say of a man desperately idle, he cannot work: or of another devoted to drinking, he cannot refrain: or, a man cannot do one thing while he is determined to do the contrary; and then we conclude that what we say a man cannot do, he really has not power to do. Into the full force of this language we shall inquire in a subsequent chapter; at present it may be sufficient to observe that it is very commonly employed as it is obviously in these cases, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*, without any reference to power at all.

There are clearly two very distinct states before us: namely, the possession of means to perform a given action, *with* a disposition to employ them; and the possession of the same means for the same action, *without* a disposition to employ them. The question is, which of these two states are we to call *power?* In all ordinary cases the latter is called power; and we are willing to adopt this nomenclature rigidly through the whole discussion. If any

person should insist on giving the name power only to the former of these states, doubtless he would evade the following argument; but he would also neednessly depart from the common, and therefore the only intelligible use of the term; while he would leave the latter very important state altogether without a name, and merely necessitate the construction of a new one, before he *individually* could be pursued through the perverse intricacies of his course.

We are quite ready to admit the fact, that a disposition towards an action seems to render the doing of it easy, and that a contrary disposition seems to render it difficult, sometimes even to impossibility. But it *only seems* to do so. By the terms *easy* and *difficult*, strictly considered, we understand only that actions are more or less welcome or pleasing to us, as must inevitably be the case, in proportion as we are willing or unwilling to perform them. It is manifest, however, that our power to perform an action is not at all affected by its being more or less agreeable to us. We are fully able to do some things which, nevertheless, we deeply abhor, and quite unable to do other things, the accomplishment of which would give us great delight; so that, after all, though aversion may prevent action, it has no tendency to diminish power.—However loath I may be to satisfy my creditors, even if I should be so reluctant as to make me feel it difficult, and even impossible, yet, as long as I have the means of doing so, I shall be held by all men

of common understanding to have the power of doing it.*

Too much time, perhaps, has been spent upon this point; yet its importance required that it should be cleared up. If the reader feels satisfied respecting it, let him set it down as an axiom hereafter not to be disputed, that *power consists in the possession of means alone;* and that, though a man certainly never will do a thing without a disposition to do it, yet, by the possession of means alone; he becomes fully able to do it, whether he will or not. Disposition is not identical with power, or necessary to it.

* It is surprising that the view of ability and power maintained in this volume, should have been supposed by many to have been opposed to those which were maintained during the first glorious revivals in the New England States, and to the doctrines inculcated in what has been justly esteemed an unanswerable, as it is usually an unanswered, treatise, that of Edwards on the Will. It will be perceived by the following extract that the sentiments of Edwards are precisely those of this volume. It is perfectly evident that by the term "moral inability," Edwards means no more than indisposition. The retaining the terms when the sentiment was abandoned, has led to much confusion of ideas, on this subject, in the Christian Church, which it is hoped, this work may, in some measure, be helpful in removing.

"But it must be observed, that the word *Inability* is used in a sense very diverse from its original import. The word signifies only a natural inability, in the proper use of it; and is applied to such cases only wherein a present will or inclination to the thing, with respect to which a person is said to be unable, is supposable. It cannot be truly said, according to the ordinary use of language, that a malicious man, let him be never so malicious, cannot hold his hand from striking, or that he is not able to shew his neighbor kindness; or that a drunkard, let his appetite be never so strong, cannot keep the cup from his mouth. In the strictest propriety of speech, a man has a thing in his power, if he has it in his choice, or at his election; and a man cannot be truly said to be unable to do a thing, when he can do it if he will. It is improperly

If he should not feel satisfied with this conclusion, let him consider the subject, put his objections into a tangible form, and resolutely come to *some definition of power* by which he may be willing to abide, *before* he proceeds to the argument in which it will be employed.

FREEDOM, OR LIBERTY OF MORAL AGENTS.

A third term which it may be desirable to define is FREEDOM, or LIBERTY, in its application to man as a moral agent. Much may hereafter depend upon the meaning we attach to these words.

By freedom in a general view, we mean simply the absence of constraint; so that powers, of whatever kind, may act according to their own nature without impediment. Thus the parts of a machine may be said to be free, when not obstructed in following the impulse of its moving power; so in re-

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said, that a person cannot perform these external actions, which are dependant on the act of the will, and which would be easily performed, if the act of the will were present.—And if it be improperly said, that he cannot perform those external voluntary actions, which depend on the will, it is in some respect more improperly said, that he is unable to exert the acts of the will themselves; because it is more evidently false, with respect to these, that he cannot if he will; for to say so is a downright contradiction: it is to say, he *cannot* will, if he *does* will. And in this case, not only is it true, that it is easy for a man to do the thing if he will, but the very willing is the doing: when once he has willed, the thing is performed, and nothing else remains to be done. *Therefore, in these things to ascribe a non-performance to the want of power or ability, is not just: because the thing wanting is not a being able, but a being willing.* There are faculties of mind and capacity of nature, and every thing else sufficient, but a disposition: nothing is wanting but a will."

spect of the body, we have freedom when our motions are not coerced; and in like manner, as intelligent beings, we enjoy freedom when the intelligent faculties of understanding, feeling, determination, and attention, can all exert themselves according to their nature, without obstruction.

Now man, *as a moral being*, is no other than an *intelligent being acting under the perception of moral truths*, so that his FREEDOM as a moral agent consists in the *unobstructed action of his intelligent faculties*, and in this alone: nor can it consist in any thing else, since there do not exist any other powers than these, to be the instruments of his moral actions.

The writer is not unaware how strenuously it has been urged that some other kind of freedom must pertain to moral agents, such as a freedom of the will, or a right disposition, of which he has perhaps said enough in another place, page 111. The indulgence of such fancies is, in all probability, to be referred to that fruitful source of error which we have already noticed, the misinterpretation of analogical terms. Thus, for example, the fact of the evil disposition of men in their fallen state, and the certainty of its result in the commission of evil, have introduced the words *captivity*, *bonds of iniquity*, and many of a similar character; very forcible and significant phraseology, doubtless, and, as metaphorical language, highly appropriate: but it seems to have been forgotten that it *is* metaphorical; or if not, its just interpretation has at all events been

overlooked. A man in bonds is not free to act; a man with a prevailing evil disposition is said to be in bonds of iniquity; therefore it is erroneously concluded that he is not free to act, and that a right disposition must be necessary to his moral freedom. This is the argument, and it seems perhaps conclusive. But in what sense is a man of evil disposition said to be in bonds? Literally, or figuratively? Surely in the latter sense alone. And what is the analogy on which the use of this metaphor is founded? Simply this, that as a man who is in bonds will certainly not perform certain actions, so a man who, though he is not in bonds, is ill-disposed, will, with equal certainty, not perform certain other actions. And this is all. The metaphor means nothing as to the actual want of freedom, because in this respect the cases are not analogous; but it denotes only the *certainty* of a line of conduct in an agent still perfectly free: it does not follow from the use of such language, therefore, however forcible, that evil disposition constitutes bondage, or that right disposition is necessary to freedom. *Moral freedom can consist in nothing more than the freedom of the powers by which moral actions are wrought; and these powers are nothing more than the intelligent faculties of man.* If there are any other, let them now for the first time be announced and described. Notwithstanding all that may be said of bondage, therefore, and allowing to the metaphor its full legitimate force, we do not scruple to maintain that moral freedom has nothing whatever to do

with the disposition; but that, in this respect, a devil is as free as an angel, and the most wicked man as free as the most holy.

RECTITUDE, DEPRAVITY.

One more set of terms it is important to define. Wherein consists the RECTITUDE, and wherein the DEPRAVITY of human nature? Few words are more often used in the discussion than the latter of these, and a precise idea of its import will greatly facilitate the accuracy and value of its application.

We have stated that the whole good or evil of man consists essentially in the state of the heart. RECTITUDE, therefore, which is a comprehensive name for whatever may be good in man, and is primarily applicable to the state of the heart, denotes a right state of it, or a *right disposition*. DEPRAVITY, therefore, can be neither more nor less than a *wrong disposition*, or a wrong state of the heart.

It is true that the other faculties of man are represented as depraved, and they do all of them, in fact, feel the pernicious influence of sin; but they do so only in a secondary and indirect manner, through the medium of the heart, on which the deteriorating effect of iniquity primarily and immediately fell. My understanding, for example, is depraved; that is, it does not now act as it ought in the apprehension and retention of divine things: but why? Not through any diminished competency to act as the instrument of perception, but through

the influence of an evil disposition, affecting, not its condition, but its exercise. The depravity of the understanding, therefore, is rather but a branch of that of the heart, in which the root of the evil is planted, and the bitter fruits are borne in every department of the man.

If any should conceive that depravity destroys, or even weakens, our powers of action, it will be desirable for them to recollect what our powers of action are. We have shown that these are no other than our intelligent faculties; the question, therefore, is, *whether a wrong disposition destroys or weakens the intelligent faculties.* That it perverts them in actual use we allow, and that it sometimes leads to sinful courses which weaken, or even destroy them; but it must be allowed, on the other hand, we think, that the intelligent faculties are not necessarily destroyed, or even weakened, by a wrong disposition. Wicked men have still the use of their reason, and some of them in a pre-eminently powerful degree, though associated with dispositions evil enough to ally them with infernal beings. In whatever degree, or from whatever cause, the rational faculties are impaired, in an equal degree we most readily admit our *power* to be diminished.

The perplexity and difficulty which have been thrown into discussions such as those which are now before us, by the use of ill-adapted or ill-defined phraseology, or by neglecting to distinguish the strict from the analogical use of words, must be the author's apology for dwelling so long on these in-

troductory matters. When a subject is either intricate in itself, or has become so through unskilful management, nothing is more conducive to its successful investigation than definitions and distinctions. In these, indeed, the very crisis of the argument lies. The differences that occur in the details of it frequently throw the disputants back upon some more general topic; so that until these are understood and agreed upon, the course of subordinate reasoning is perpetually broken, and can never be satisfactorily prosecuted. The author intends and hopes to use all his principal terms strictly in the meaning he has assigned to them, and to adhere rigidly to the principles of mental and moral philosophy which he has laid down. Such of his readers as may agree with him in these, will form agreeable companions to him in his course, and he has a cheerful hope of gaining their acquiescence in his conclusions; but to what purpose should any go further, who dissent from these axioms? To such readers his reasonings must always appear fallacious, and objections continually arise, throwing us back on points which should have been previously determined. The decision of the religious argument is involved in the principles of moral philosophy from which we set out, and all who may differ from the author upon these, he requests to proceed no further, but to apply their thoughts to the reconsideration of them: for if the difference should be irreconcilable here, it would be sure to be so every where else, and it would be better to part at once,

with mutual expressions of candour and good-will, than to prolong a discussion which may irritate, but cannot convince. Should they choose to continue their perusal of this little work, he hopes they will do him, not the favour, but the justice, to recollect the sense he has given to his own terms, that, at all events, whatever they may think of his arguments, they may judge fairly of his consistency. If any should prefer passing by the general argument altogether, the author will meet them again with pleasure on the plain and decisive ground of scripture testimony.

CHAP. III.

Whether man in his natural state has power to repent:—The argument from the nature of the case.

After these brief explanations, we come to the question before us: namely, *Whether, in harmony with the admitted necessity of the Spirit's influence, it can be maintained that man has power to repent without his aid.*

Let it be distinctly remembered, that we affirm man to have *no disposition* to repent, but, on the contrary, a most extreme aversion to it; his heart

being desperately wicked. But, according to the definition we have given, *power is altogether different from disposition*, and implies nothing respecting it. It is simply *the possession of means*, which is compatible with disposition of any kind.

The question, therefore, comes to this: *What are the means necessary to repentance*, or to induce an entire change of mind towards God?

They are, first, The opportunity of becoming acquainted with truths adapted and sufficient to produce such a change. For the consideration of suitable topics is the only method of effecting a change of any kind in our disposition, nor can a change be reasonably expected further than adequate reasons are shown for it.

Secondly, A state of the understanding physically sound, competent to discern the true import of the matters presented for consideration. This is obviously indispensable.

Thirdly, A proper connexion between the understanding and the heart, so that there may be no obstruction to the influence of the truths discovered.

These appear to be all the means necessary to repentance; and it may safely be affirmed that, under these conditions, consideration would infallibly produce it. If it would not, it must be either, 1, because the reasons presented are insufficient; or, 2, because the understanding could not discern them; or, 3, because the action of the understanding upon the heart was obstructed: all which things are contrary to the suppositions made. It requires to be

shown, therefore, whether these conditions do meet in the case of a sinner or not.

First, then, Has the Most High presented to a sinner any just and sufficient reasons for repenting? We feel as though the very question involved impiety. It is manifest that, if he has not done so, he has the whole blame of impenitence to take to himself.

Secondly, Is the understanding of man capable of discerning the true import of the statements presented to him? Undoubtedly it is, if he be sane. If any malady impairs his rational faculties, the excuse is valid; but nothing more than sane rational faculties is necessary to understand the word of God. To *receive* it, or to have a *spiritual* view of it, this, indeed, is not to be ascribed to a natural man; but these phrases indicate either a right state of heart, or the engagement of the understanding under a right state of heart; and they imply that which we contend for, namely, the faculty of previously discerning the import of the divine word, because without this it could neither be received nor rejected, neither considered as excellent or foolish.

Thirdly, Is there any such derangement in the faculties of man, that the heart does not now yield to the force of objects presented to the understanding? We know that it exhibits more sensibility to some than to others; but the fact that it feels the force of any is a proof that the faculty still exists unimpaired; while the other part of the statement, that it does not feel duly the force of all, is fairly to

be accounted for by inattention, or a selection of the topics by which attention shall be engaged. Let the case be examined, and it will be found that the heart is still, as truly and as forcibly as ever, affected by whatever objects occupy the understanding.

The means of repentance, therefore, and all the means of repentance, are possessed by a sinner without the Spirit; but the possession of the means of repentance constitutes the power of repentance; therefore, a sinner has power to repent without the Spirit.

It might be here said, that if a disposition to repent be necessary to repentance actually taking place, it ought to be considered as a part of the power. This is just a specimen of the way in which the argument is liable to be interrupted, by objections arising from its pressure at particular points; but it is sufficient to say that the meaning of our terms is already settled, and we cannot vary.

If it is still to be debated what power is, the reader is in reality advanced no further than the 110th page of this little volume, and would do much better to return to it.

CHAP. IV.

Whether, in the conversion of a sinner, power is imparted:—The argument from the work of the Spirit.

HAVING seen the condition of man without the Holy Spirit, let us now observe him under the influence of this divine agent, and endeavour to ascertain the nature of the work which he accomplishes in the heart. We have called it generally, the conversion of a sinner to God: but what is the conversion of a sinner to God? Or, *When the Holy Spirit produces the conversion of a sinner to God, what does he produce?* The question may seem too simple to be so carefully put, but we shall hereafter find it greatly to our advantage to have formed clear ideas on it.

Now the actual conversion of a sinner presents many details; such as an extensive change of his views of divine things; a variety of emotions, and often of conflicting emotions, in his bosom; a total change of his principles and preferences; and a corresponding change in his conduct and pursuits. It is manifest, however, that in all this there is one grand and leading feature, one principal point of change, to which the rest are subordinate; we mean the change of the disposition, or the habitually pre-

valent state of the heart. The change in the views is the means of producing this change of heart, without which that would be of no advantage; from this change of heart springs the change of conduct, which could otherwise have no consistency or permanency; while the various and conflicting emotions which arise are the mere accidents of the change, modified by the previous state of the mind, and the considerations chiefly instrumental in transforming it. In a word, then, that which the Holy Spirit produces in the conversion of a sinner, is essentially *a change in the habitually prevalent state of his heart.*

This may be easily illustrated. The state of a sinner's heart towards God while carnal is declared to be enmity (Rom. viii. 7;) when converted it is love (Col. i. 21:) and the conversion of a sinner consists in the effectuation of this change. Once he hated God, now he seeks his friendship; once he avoided the Lord's ways, now he chooses them; once he delighted in sin, now it is his burden; once he lived far from God, now he desires his constant presence. This change is what the Holy Spirit produces when he effects the conversion of a sinner.

It may be added, that this is the principal result of the Spirit's work. In one view it is an *ultimate* result, to which the enlightening of the mind and the various exercises connected with it, are conducive, and in leading to which their entire value consists: while, in another view, it is an *initiatory* effect, from which alone any true holiness or trans-

formation of life can proceed, and by which such transformation is secured. It is, in a word, the sum of true religion, which is accordingly declared to consist in having a new heart; (Ezek. xvii. 13. xxxvi. 26.) the restoration of man to essential rectitude, and the image of God. To maintain this change, and to give it universal influence is the whole scope of the Spirit's operation.

The next point requiring observation is *the method in which this grand change in the state of the heart is produced.* To an inquiry upon this subject the answer is ready and obvious; it is produced by *a change of views* in reference to divine things. A sinner does not begin to love God, whom he once hated, without having some new ideas of his excellency; nor to hate sin, which he once loved, without some discoveries of its criminality. In order to convert the heart, the blessed Spirit enlightens the eyes: and hence he is represented as accomplishing his work by the instrumentality of the word of truth. (Psalm xix. 7, 8. James i. 18. Eph. i. 18.) This is the use and end of the change of views which always takes place in conversion, that by them the heart may be transformed.

The views by which this change is produced, however, are in one respect, far from being *new* views, since they are only such as are contained in the sacred scriptures, and such as, in many cases, have been often presented to the mind before.—*What causes them now to produce a new effect?* And what does the Holy Spirit do, in order to give them

this unusual efficacy? *He induces a sinner to attend to them, and thus insures their influence.* Thus it is said that "the Lord *opened Lydia's heart, that she attended* to the things which were spoken by Paul." Acts xvi. 14.

The author is very desirous that his readers should fully satisfy themselves, before they proceed, whether the preceding is an accurate and scriptural account of the conversion of a sinner to God. If any of them should conceive that there is any further change produced in conversion, he entreats them to ask what it is, and not to satisfy themselves without a clear and intelligible idea of it.

If the preceding view of conversion be correct, it is manifest that the Holy Spirit acts herein in conformity with the intelligent constitution of man, which has been already described. In all this process there is nothing extraordinary, but the originating impulse; in all other respects it is precisely what takes place in every change of the feelings, and the very method by which a thousand changes in them are wrought every day. Here is the understanding dwelling upon certain truths, and the heart influenced accordingly. The extraordinary thing is that a man is come to dwell upon truths which he once banished from his thoughts; but this, it is plain, makes no difference in the truths themselves, nor in the state of the faculties which he employs upon them. Here is *no change of power*, but simply a different employment of the power which has been all along possessed.

It appears, therefore, that, whatever the state of man as to power may be before he is influenced by the Holy Spirit, it is the same afterwards, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit makes no difference in this respect. *He imparts no power*, but merely sets in motion existing powers by an extraordinary impulse; so that the power of turning to God must, on this ground also, be admitted to exist without his influence.

If it should be suggested that the impulse thus given should be called power, we have only again to refer to our definition, which we are very willing to alter, if any of our readers will show cause; but from which, until then, every consideration forbids us to depart.

CHAP. V.

Whether the possession of power is not involved in the praise and blameworthiness of actions:—The argument from the nature of sin.

The actions and character of men are familiarly spoken of in terms which convey either censure or commendation. Similar epithets are likewise employed by God himself upon similar subjects. Hence he speaks continually of *righteousness* and of

sin. The conduct of men in an unconverted state he charges upon them as highly criminal; that is to say, the very conduct from which the Holy Spirit, in conversion, causes them to turn away, he severely condemns. Now, familiar as this kind of language is, it carries with it an idea strictly and powerfully applicable to our present purpose. For if an action, or rather the person by whom it is performed, be justly considered as worthy of praise or blame, it must be because there is some peculiar feature in his conduct, giving occasion to, and corresponding with, this peculiar view of it. The actions of volcanoes and whirlwinds are not blamed, neither are those of brutes; *why should those of men be so?*

To deserved blame or commendation several conditions are required; but the only one necessary to be now noticed, is *the possession of power to have acted otherwise.* This is uniformly and absolutely essential. If, for example, a man is praised that he did not go to a gaming-house, and it is found that the reason of his not going was his confinement in a prison, the only ground of the praise awarded him is taken away. That which renders a person praiseworthy in the doing of good actions, is his doing them voluntarily, that is, under the impulse of his own feelings, and no other; and when, therefore, he might have done otherwise. In like manner, it is essential to blameworthiness that a man should have power to avoid the action as well as to perform it. If your servant, for instance, has injured your property, you hold him criminal because

of the apparent voluntary nature of the act; but, if it could be satisfactorily proved to you that it was involuntary, and not through carelessness merely, but by some external force which he had not power to resist, you would immediately alter your opinion, and clear him from censure. Every man feels that, when a fault is charged upon him, he makes a good and irrefragable defence, if he can say truly, *I could not help it—I did all I had power to do.* A person who should persist in attaching blame when this was clearly proved, would infallibly be considered as blinded by passion; and such a censure would soon become light to those who might have to bear it, inasmuch as it would be consciously and manifestly undeserved.

Let these simple illustrations be applied to the case before us. We argue thus, using for convenience the syllogistic form:—God blames man for not being conformed to his will; but God blames no man unjustly; therefore, whatever is necessary to just blame, must be found in the condition of man. The conclusion of this syllogism forms the first member of the next:—Whatever is necessary to just blame is found in the condition of man; but power to act otherwise is necessary to just blame; therefore man has power to act otherwise than that for which God blames him.

Which of these positions or conclusions will be disputed the author cannot tell. To him it appears that the possession of power to do right, is essential to the very possibility of doing wrong, and that,

if man does not possess it, he can be guilty of no sin.

The opinion that *blameworthiness towards God is a different thing from blameworthiness towards men*, is without just foundation. There is, and can be, but one set of ideas suggested to our minds by this and its kindred terms, *sin*, *righteousness*, *condemnation*, &c.; among these ideas, that of the possession of power is always found, and it is inseparable from the use of the terms themselves. That God has used these terms, knowing what meaning they conveyed to us, and that they could convey no other, is a pretty fair argument that he intended them to convey these ideas; but if he did not so intend them, and has not given us his own explanation of them, then he has left us altogether in the dark as to their meaning, with the additional evil of a powerful tendency to understand them in an applicable sense of our own. Will any friend of God be pleased with this alternative? Either he has thus uselessly spoken, or he has used words in their ordinary meaning; and if he has done the latter, the use of the words *sin*, *condemnation*, &c. essentially implies the existence of the power contended for.

It has been said, that no doubt can be entertained by any man of his sinfulness, *because his own conscience convicts him of it*. This is most true, and it bears directly upon the argument in hand; for the very reason why a man's conscience convicts him of sin is, that it also assures him of his power to avoid it. To this extent he always and inevitably

feels himself subject to blame, but no further. Persuade a man that, in any given instance, he has not the power of acting otherwise, and you immediately free him from all self-accusation in that respect. Hence there has arisen so marked a distinction as to the kinds of conduct for which men blame or justify themselves respectively. If a man commits a fraud, he reproaches himself for it, he feels it was a deliberate villany; but if he breaks into a rage, he says, (though unjustly) I could not help it, it is my constitution—and he feels no blame: and if you represent to him the state of his heart towards God, and attach censure there, you find that he uses the same weapon of defence with still greater force;—O! says he, that is natural to me, I cannot help that. A thousand such examples might be adduced, but these are sufficient to show that the reproofs of conscience are founded upon, and proportioned to, the conscious possession of power; and that, to whatever extent a man is really persuaded that he has not power to act differently, to the same extent he inevitably feels himself exempt from blame.

Some persons have satisfied themselves with saying that men must feel themselves blame-worthy because *they know they have sinned freely*, or *voluntarily*. True: but what purpose does this statement serve? Suppose that men have this opinion of themselves; it must be either just or unjust. If just, it must be founded on their power to act otherwise, which is essential to voluntary action, and which is all we have contended for; if

unjust, it is only a fallacy of which they ought to be disabused. And what is the meaning, besides, of sinning, or doing any thing else, voluntarily? It is to act under our own feelings, without any other influence; that is to say, it is to select one out of several things, any of which we might have chosen. If I have not power to act otherwise than I do, my actions are not free, but constrained.

It would, after all, be much more candid, if those who maintain that man has not power to avoid sin, would acknowledge that, according to that principle, the sinner loses his criminal character. They have excellent authority for doing so, and no less than that of our Lord and Saviour himself. "If ye were blind," said he to the Pharisees, "ye should have no sin." John ix. 46: in other words, If you had not the means of doing right, you should be charged with no fault in doing wrong. And if this is the principle on which HE proceeds in the distribution of blame, why should *we* be discontented with it? It is impossible, indeed, to admit that sin is no fault, since the sentiment would subvert the whole fabric of the divine government, and turn the oracles of eternal wisdom into foolishness: let, therefore, the untenable notion of man's inability, which plainly involves such consequences, be at once, and cordially, and for ever abandoned.

Some divines have shown so much candour as to allow this consequence *in part*. Taking up the general principle that God blames men only for not

doing what they could do, and not what they could not do, and conceiving that men cannot do any thing spiritually, but only externally good, they hold that *men are not blameable for not doing spiritual things*, such as believing in Christ.

It is pleasant to see the force of truth in any measure admitted by antagonists in argument, and we may fairly set this concession down as no trifling confirmation of the principle we have maintained, namely, that blameworthiness is commensurate with power. But to what an extraordinary position have our brethren thus been driven! There is nothing blameable in any spiritual wickedness, they affirm, because man has no power to do any thing spiritually good. By things *spiritually* good or evil, we suppose we are to understand things good or evil *in disposition*, or *in the state of the heart;* so that the idea entertained is, that there is *no blameworthiness in any state of the heart, however evil.* Wonderful imagination! Nothing blameable in pride, lust, hatred, malice, revenge, love of sin, enmity to God, contempt of salvation, rejection of Christ, or in any of the dreadful evils of the heart which might be added to the catalogue! What then is the bible, but a mass of awful fictions, falsely representing that on account of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience? Is it not strange, too, that, while there is no blameworthiness in these *inward evils*, there should be so much in the *outward expression* of them? There is harm, it seems, in fornication, but

none in lasciviousness; it is censurable to strike a blow, but not so to be in a rage; it is wrong to commit sin, but not so to love it. Yet why should this be? Does not the law of God look into the inmost soul, and require purity there? Has not our Lord declared that whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart; and the apostle, that whoso hateth his brother is a murderer? (Matt. v. 28; 1 John iii. 15.) Besides, if these outward acts of iniquity are held to be blameworthy, it must, upon the principles of our brethren themselves, be *because they have power to avoid them:* but what power has any man over his conduct, *except by having power over his heart*, out of which the conduct actually and inevitably springs? They seem startled by our maintaining that men can regulate their conduct *by their dispositions*, but really it is we who have the greater cause to wonder, when we find them affirming that a man can regulate his conduct *without his dispositions*. They would be hard task-masters, if the government of the world were in their hands. The yoke of our Maker is easy indeed in comparison with theirs.

Our readers will probably agree with us in thinking that nothing can be more futile than the attempt to withdraw spiritual evils, that is, evils of the heart, from deserved blame. And if they are deserving of blame, upon the principles of those with whom we are arguing men must have power to avoid them; because, as they allow, God blames us for not doing only what we have power to do.

How delightful would it be to find persons of such amiable candour, and of clear views too to a certain extent, scattering, by a vigorous effort, the perplexities which yet surround them!

CHAP. VI.

Whether the possession of power is not implied in the divine commands:—The argument from moral obligation.

It is an obvious, but remarkable circumstance, that the same things which are described as wrought by the Holy Spirit, and as indispensably requiring his influence, are elsewhere made the subject of divine command, and enjoined to be performed by men. "Repent and be converted," said the apostles, Acts iii. 19. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," said the prophets, Isa. lv. 7. "Come unto me," said the Saviour, Matt. xi. 28. "Wash thy heart from wickedness," said Jehovah, Jer. iv. 14. What are we to understand by this?

The issuing of commands is a thing of perpetual occurrence among men; but it implies always a peculiar condition in order to give it propriety. One feature of this condition, and the only one immedi-

ately pertaining to our present argument, is, that the *power* of the persons commanded should be proportionate to the obedience required. This is a point of obvious and indispensable necessity. Whether it may be just or not that any commands at all should be addressed to me from a given quarter, may perhaps be questioned, but it is at all events unjust that I should be commanded beyond my strength. It may be possible that all the power I have should be rightly at the disposal of another; but what would any one have more? Or what could a claim for more result in, but absurdity and ridicule? Authority in him who commands is strictly correlative to power in him who obeys. Who thinks of commanding the dead; or of requiring the living to do what they have not power to perform, as the lame to walk, or the deaf to listen?

One would naturally infer, therefore, that when God issues his commands, the very fact of his doing so, as a being of adorable justice, implies an appropriate condition on the part of men, to whom they are addressed; *they must have power to do whatever God enjoins upon them.* To issue commands under any other circumstances is unjust and absurd, and cannot be ascribed to the most blessed.

Under the force of this obvious inference, some divines, deeming it indispensable to maintain human inability, have been led *to abandon the obligation of the divine law;* alleging, that, as men cannot do what is enjoined, and God knows they cannot, so he does not expect they should; and that *the on-*

ly use of the law is *to set forth God's rights, and our sinfulness.* Such is the force of system. With what eyes can these persons read the bible? The commands of God are expressly and directly addressed to men, they are worded in every way expressive of his will and authority; what could he have said more or otherwise, *if he had intended them to be obeyed?* But the use of the law, we are told, is to set forth his rights. Yet what rights can he have, irrespectively of man's power? Rights of moral government pertain essentially to creatures capable of moral action, and can extend no further. Where there are no such creatures, (and according to this view there are none upon earth) there no such government can be exercised, nor can any such rights therefore exist.

In order to maintain the strange opinion that God may justly command when we have not power to obey, it has been a favourite idea with some divines that there is something peculiar about *his* supremacy, which exempts it from the force of ordinary rules; and it has often been announced with oracular wisdom, as an axiom in a certain school of theology, that *God's rights are not to be measured by our ability.* We trust we have no desire to limit the Holy One of Israel, but cherish an unfeigned joy in his supremacy and sovereignty. But God has *limited himself* by the very fact of establishing a moral government, with definite rules and principles, which *he* has shown no desire to violate; and he can feel himself little indebted, we apprehend,

to those who have advocated his liberty to do so. He means to be a *righteous* judge: and if so, his commands must be proportionate to our power, whatever that power may be, or may become.

It is of little consequence, we should rather say it is of no consequence at all, *how* a change may have been wrought in the power possessed by me; whether by means blameable or otherwise, whether augmenting my power or diminishing it: the principle never can be departed from, that, *such as my present power is, precisely such is my present obligation.*

As to the remaining alleged use of the law (upon the supposition of human inability,) this is the strangest of all. It is *to exhibit our sinfulness.* But on the above supposition, what sinfulness have I to be exhibited? If I had power, according to Christ's declaration, I should have sin; but if I have no power, I have no sin: so that, if the law exhibits me as a sinner, it exhibits what is not the fact, and stands in need of correction. To deny, therefore, that the law of God is given and intended as the rule of our obedience, is to deny its utility altogether. If it does not answer this purpose, it answers none; or only the mischievous one of ascribing to God rights which he does not possess, and to man iniquities of which he is not guilty.

It has been imagined by others, that *the law may be considered as two-fold, an internal and an external law,* the letter and the spirit; the one enjoining outward actions, and the other referring to the

state of heart. The latter, or the spiritual part of law, is supposed not to be addressed to men in a way of command; but only the former, or the outward precepts, which men, it is allowed, have power to fulfil. It is well that men are allowed to have power to do any thing that God commands, for so far his ways will appear to be just. But we should like to know on what this distinction in the law is founded. The apostle affirms that the law itself is spiritual; and though some of its requirements are of an outward kind, it contains many also that are strictly spiritual, and the state of the heart is pre-eminently regarded in all. Such indeed is the grand requirement in which the whole law is comprehended: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." (Mark xii. 30, 31.) It would appear also, that, if God may not command the state of the heart, he cannot effectually command any thing, inasmuch as all external actions originate and take their character from it. It is in the heart, in truth, as we have already shown, that the right and the wrong of every action essentially lies; and if God has not aimed his law at the heart, he has passed by the only part of our nature to which it is applicable at all.

If this were not enough, we should like to know, too, how a man can have power to perform things outwardly right, but not inwardly so. Outward actions are not such as are commanded, unless they are performed in the spirit which is commanded, every precept requiring an internal as well as an ex-

ternal conformity. Besides, there is no way of regulating the outward conduct, but by first regulating the heart. A man's power over his actions consists in his power over his heart: destroy this, and the other instantly expires.

As the very fact of the divine being issuing his commands, seems to demonstrate the existence of a corresponding power of obeying them, this argument will be greatly strengthened by considering the awful consequences which he attaches to disobedience; a topic to be pursued in the following chapter.

CHAP. VII.

*Whether the possession of power be not implied in the distribution of rewards and punishments;—The argument from human responsibility.**

We referred, at the close of the preceding chapter, to the consequences which it has pleased the

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* It cannot fail to be interesting to the reader to compare the sentiments of Mr. Hinton with those of Mr. Fuller: we shall, therefore, extract entire that section of the "Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation" in which Mr. F. treats of "the inability of sinners to believe in Christ." It will be perceived that Mr. F. fully maintains that spiritual or moral inability is "*nothing else*" than a want of "inclination;" and that "spiritual power" is the same thing as "a right state of mind." We are perfectly satisfied that any candid enquirer

Most High to connect with the violation of his commandments. As he has issued a law to be obeyed, so he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world. (Acts xvii. 31.) "We must all

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on this point will arrive at the conclusion, that the sentiments of Mr. Fuller and Mr. Hinton, on this subject, are identical; but that Mr. H. has expressed those sentiments, under more correct terms than his predecessor:

"On the inability of sinners to believe in Christ, and do things spiritually good.

"This objection is seldom made in form, unless it be by persons who deny it to be the duty of a sinner to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Intimations are often given, however, that it is absurd and cruel to require of any man what it is beyond his power to perform; and, as the Scriptures declare that "no man can come to Christ, except the Lord draw him," and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," it is concluded that these are things to which the sinner, while unregenerate, is under no obligation.

"The answer that has frequently been made to this reasoning is, in effect, as follows: Men are no more unable to do things spiritually good, than they are to be subject to the law of God, which the "carnal mind is not, nor *can* be." And the reason why we have no power to comply with these things is, we have lost it by the fall; but, though we have lost our ability to obey, God has not lost his authority to command. There is some truth in this answer; but it is apprehended to be insufficient. It is true that sinners are no more and no otherwise unable to do any thing spiritually good, than they are to yield a perfect submission to God's holy law; and that the inability of both arises from the same source—the original apostacy of human nature. Yet if the nature of this inability were direct, or such as consisted in the want of *rational faculties*, *bodily powers*, or *external advantages*, its being the consequence of the fall would not set aside that objection. Some men pass through life totally insane. This may be one of the *effects* of sin; yet the Scriptures never convey any idea of such persons being dealt with at the last judgment, on the same ground as if they had been sane. On the contrary, they teach that "to whom much is given, of him much shall be required." Another is deprived of the sight of his eyes, and so rendered unable to read the

appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every man may receive according to his works, whether they have been good or evil." (2 Cor. v. 10.)

This part of the divine administration is evidently

Scriptures. This also may be the *effect* of sin; and, in some cases, of his own personal misconduct; but whatever punishment may be inflicted on him for such misconduct, he is not blameworthy for not reading the Scriptures, after he has lost his ability to do so. A third possesses the use of reason, and of all his senses and members; but has no other opportunity of knowing the will of God than what is afforded him by the light of nature. It would be equally repugnant to Scripture and reason to suppose that this man will be judged by the same rule as others who have lived under the light of revelation. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

"The inability, in each of these cases, is *natural;* and, to whatever degree it exists, let it arise from what cause it may, it excuses its subject of blame, in the account of both God and man. The law of God itself requires no creature to love him, or obey him beyond his "strength," or with more than all the powers which he possesses. If the inability of sinners to believe in Christ, or to do things spiritually good, were of this nature, it would undoubtedly form an excuse in their favor; and it must be as absurd to exhort them to such duties as to exhort the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to walk. But the inability of sinners is not such as to induce the Judge of all the earth (who cannot do other than right) to abate in his demands. It is a fact that he does require them, and that without paying any regard to their inability, *to love him,* and *to fear him,* and *to do all his commandments always. The blind are admonished to look, the deaf to hear,* and *the dead to arise.*—Isa. xlii. 18; Eph. v. 14. —If there were no other proof than what is afforded by this single fact, it ought to satisfy us that the blindness, deafness, and death of sinners, to that which is spiritually good, is of a different nature from that which furnishes an excuse. This, however, is not the only ground of proof. The thing speaks for itself. There is an essential difference between an inability which is independent of the inclination and one that is owing to nothing else. It is just as impossible, no doubt, for any person to do that which he has no mind to do, as to perform that which surpasses his natural powers; and hence it

pervaded by a general principle of great importance namely, that *God holds men answerable to him for their conduct:* and doubtless, if he does so at all, he does so with undisputable justice. But, in order

is that the same terms are used in the one case as in the other. Those who were under the dominion of envy and malignity "*could not* speak peaceably;" and those who have "eyes full of adultery *cannot* cease from sin." Hence, also, the following language: "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?" "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be." "They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." "No man *can* come to me, except the Father, which sent me, draw him." It is also true that many have affected to treat the distinction between natural and moral inability as more curious than solid. "If we be unable (say they) we are unable. As to the nature of the inability, it is a matter of no account. Such distinctions are perplexing to plain Christians, and beyond their capacity." But surely the plainest and weakest Christian, in reading his Bible, if he pay any regard to what he reads, must perceive a manifest difference between the blindness of Bartimeus, who was ardently desirous that "he might receive his sight," and that of the unbelieving Jews, who "closed their eyes, lest they should see, and be converted, and be healed;" and between the want of the natural sense of hearing, and the state of those who "have ears, but hear not."

"So far as my observation extends, those persons who affect to treat this distinction as a matter of mere curious speculation are as ready to make use of it as other people where their own interest is concerned. If they be accused as injuring their fellow-creatures, and can allege that what they did was not *knowingly*, or of *design*, I believe they never fail to do so: or when charged with neglecting their duty to a parent or a master, if they can say in truth that they were *unable* to do it at the time, *let their will have been ever so good:* they are never known to omit the plea: and should such a master or parent reply, by suggesting that their want of ability arose from want of inclination, they would very easily understand it to be the language of reproach, and be very earnest to maintain the contrary. You never hear a person in such circumstances reason as he does in religion. He does not say, "If I am unable, I am unable; it is of no account whether my ability be of this kind or of that;" but he labors

to just responsibility, there is required a peculiar and corresponding condition in the parties held to be responsible to him; why does he hold any to be so? Plainly because of some peculiarity in their

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with all his might to establish the difference. Now if the subject be so clearly understood and acted upon where interest is concerned, and never appears difficult but in religion, it is but too manifest where the difficulty lies. If by fixing the guilt of our conduct upon our father Adam, we can sit comfortably in our nest, we shall be very averse from a sentiment that tends to disturb our repose by planting a thorn in it.

"It is sometimes objected that the inability of sinners to believe in Christ is not the effect of their depravity: for that Adam himself, in his purest state, was only a *natural man*, and had no power to perform spiritual duties. But this objection belongs to another topic, and has, I hope, been already answered. To this, however, it may be added, "the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," (1 Cor. ii. 14.) is not a man possessed of the holy image of God, as was Adam, but of mere natural accomplishments, as were the "wise men of the world," the philosophers of Greece and Rome, to whom the things were "foolishness." Moreover, if the inability of sinners to perform spiritual duties were of the kind alleged in the objection, they must be equally unable to commit the opposite sins.—He, that from the constitution of his nature, is absolutely unable to understand, or believe, or love, a certain kind of truth, must, of necessity, be alike unable to shut his eyes against it, to disbelieve, to reject, or to hate it. But it is manifest that all men are capable of the latter; it must, therefore, follow that nothing but the depravity of their heart renders them incapable of the former.

"Some writers, as have been already observed, have allowed that sinners are the subjects of an inability which arises from their depravity; but they still contend that this is not *all*, but that they are *naturally* and *morally* unable to believe in Christ; and this they think agreeable to the Scriptures, which represent them as both *unable* and *unwilling* to come to him for life. But these two kinds of inability cannot consist with each other, so as both to exist in the same thing. A moral inability supposes a natural ability. He who never, in any state, was possessed of the power of seeing, cannot be said to *shut his eyes* against the light. If the Jews had not been possessed of natural powers equal to

condition. In such a condition the possession of power is a uniform and essential element. A person may be my servant, and therefore I may consider him answerable to me for the occupation of his

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the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, there had been no justice in that cutting question and answer, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye *cannot* hear my word." A total physical inability must, of necessity, supercede a moral one. To suppose, therefore, that the phrase, no man *can* come to me," is meant to describe the former; and "Ye *will not* come to me that ye may have life," the latter: is to suppose that our Saviour taught what is self-contradictory.

"Some have supposed that, in attributing physical or natural power to men, we deny their *natural depravity*. Through the poverty of language, words are obliged to be used in different senses. When we speak of men as *by nature* depraved, we do not mean to convey the idea of sin being an essential part of human nature, or of the constitution of man as man: our meaning is, that it is not a mere effect of education and example; but is, from his very birth, so interwoven through all his powers, so ingrained, as it were, in his very soul, as to grow up with him and become natural to him.

On the other hand, when the term *natural* is used as opposed to *moral*, and applied to the powers of the soul, it is designed to express those faculties which are strictly a part of our nature as men, and which are necessary to our being accountable creatures. By confounding these ideas we may be always disputing and bring nothing to an issue.

Finally: It is sometimes suggested that to attribute to sinners a natural ability of performing things spiritually good is to nourish their self-sufficiency; and that to represent it as only *moral* is to suppose that it is not insuperable, but may, after all, be overcome by efforts of their own. But surely it is not necessary, in order to destroy a spirit of self-sufficiency, to deny that we are men and accountable creatures; which is all that natural ability supposes. If any person imagine it possible, of his own accord, to choose that from which he is utterly averse, let him make the trial.

"Some have alleged that "natural power is only sufficient to perform natural things, and that spiritual power is required to the performance of spiritual things." But this statement is far from accurate. Natural power is as necessary to the performance of spiritual as of natural things: we must possess the powers of men in order to perform the duties of good

time; but if his power of labor is taken away, his responsibility no longer exists. The awarding of praise and blame, of punishment and reward, proceeds universally upon this principle, so far as it is

men. And as to spiritual power, or which is the same thing, a right state of mind, it is not properly a faculty of the soul, but a quality which it possesses: and which, though it be essential to the *actual performance* of spiritual obedience, yet is not necessary to our being under *obligation* to perform it.

"If a traveller, from a disinclination to the western continent, should direct his course perpetually towards the east, he would, in time, arrive at the place which he designed to shun. In like manner, it has been remarked by some who have observed the progress of this controversy, that there are several important points in which false Calvinism, in its ardent desire to steer clear of Arminianism, is brought to agree with it. We have seen already that they agree in their notions of the original holiness in Adam, and in the inconsistency of the duty of believing with the doctrines of election and particular redemption. To this may be added, they are agreed in making the grace of God necessary to the accountableness of sinners with regard to spiritual obedience. The one pleads for graceless sinners being free from obligation, the other admits of obligation, but founds it on the notion of universal grace. Both are agreed that where there is no grace, there is no duty But if grace be the ground of obligation, it is no more grace but debt. It is that which, if any thing good be required of the sinner, cannot justly be withheld. This is, in effect, acknowledged by both parties. The one contends that, where no grace is given, there can be no obligation to spiritual obedience: and therefore acquits the unbeliever of guilt in not coming to Christ, that he might have life, and in the neglect of all spiritual religion. The other argues that, if man be totally depraved, and no grace be given him to counteract his depravity, he is blameless: that is, his depravity is no longer depravity: he is innocent in the account of his Judge; consequently he can need no Savior: and if justice be done him, will be exempt from punishment, (if not entitled to heaven,) in virtue of his personal innocence. Thus the whole system of grace is rendered void; and fallen angels, who have not been partakers of it, must be in a far preferable state to that of fallen men, who, by Jesus taking hold of their nature, are liable to become blameworthy and eternally lost. But, if the essential powers of the mind be the same whether we be pure or depraved,

acknowledged to be just; every deviation from it is an admitted instance of partiality, wickedness, or folly.

The application of these remarks to the divine government will lead us to a very easy and obvious conclusion. The Almighty holds men responsible to him for their conduct; but power over our own conduct is necessary to just responsibility; therefore, *men have power over their own conduct.*

An imagined necessity of maintaining human

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and be sufficient to render any creature an accountable being, whatever be his disposition, grace is what its proper meaning imports—*free favor*, or *favor towards the unworthy*—and the redemption of Christ, with all its holy and happy effects, is what the Scriptures represent it—*necessary to deliver us from the state into which we are fallen antecedently to its being bestowed.*"

We add also another passage out of many which might be quoted, equally decisive as to the sentiments of Mr. Fuller:

"Some writers have affirmed that men are under both a moral and natural inability of coming to Christ: or that they neither will nor can come to him: but, if there be no other inability than what arises from aversion, this language is not accurate; for it conveys the idea that, if all aversion of heart were removed, there would still be a natural and insurmountable bar in the way. But no such idea as this is conveyed by our Lord's words: the only bar to which he refers lies in that reluctance or aversion which the *drawing* of the Father implies or removes. Nor will such an idea comport with what he elsewhere teaches. "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Why do ye not understand my speech? *Because ye cannot hear my word.*" These cutting interrogations proceed on the supposition that they *could have received the doctrine of Christ, if it had been agreeable to their corrupt hearts; and its being otherwise was the* ONLY *reason why they could not understand and believe it.* If sinners were naturally and absolutely unable to believe in Christ, they would be equally unable to disbelieve: for it requires the same powers to reject as to embrace."

inability has induced an unwillingness to admit this reasoning. It is alleged that the subject, like many others, is mysterious, and that *we should not pry into such profound investigations.*

Undoubtedly many subjects are mysterious, and it is both our duty and our interest not to push inquiry where God checks it. But *upon what authority is the responsibility of man ranked among the mysteries of religion?*

Certainly no question can be more important, or more conducive to a practical end, than this:—On what ground does God hold me answerable for my conduct? Nor can there be a question better entitled to a plain and convincing reply. Upon the answer to such an inquiry, the complexion of a man's feelings, in reflecting upon his character, obviously depends. If the censure which attaches to him be apparently unjust, or if the justice of it be hidden among divine mysteries, he may be assured indeed of condemnation before God, but he cannot feel any condemnation of himself. Humiliation, shame, penitential sorrow, can spring from nothing but such justice in his condemnation as he himself can understand; and if these features of character be of any excellency or importance, it is not less so, not merely that our responsibility should be just, but that its justice should be apparent to ourselves. A shadow upon this topic darkens every other; since our views of divine mercy, our joy in salvation, our grateful devotedness, all and every part of Christian character, will bear a proportion

to *the justice we discern* in our condemnation and ruin. It ought to be, therefore, with every man, a matter of the utmost anxiety to have clear views of this point. Not that we should be unwilling to leave in mystery what God has placed there, but, respecting the grounds of our responsibility, it is yet to be proved that he has withdrawn them from our cognizance; and when we think of their obvious and fundamental importance, it may be deemed almost, if not altogether, incredible that he should have done so.

This is the less to be supposed, because responsibility is not, by any means, a mysterious subject in itself. We are in the habit of holding each other responsible continually, and of alloting most readily both praise and censure, punishment and reward. The principles on which we do this are perfecly simple and obvious; and there is a natural and irresistible tendency to apply them to the divine conduct, as well as our own. God has made use of our own language in this respect, and has given us reason to suppose, therefore, that he entertains similar ideas, and acts on similar principles; otherwise his declarations are calculated to mislead. If, when he speaks of righteous judgment, he does not mean the same as we do when using the same terms, the language, at best, is useless: what else does he mean? Only give such an unintelligible character to scriptural phraseology generally, and the value of the bible is utterly destroyed.

And why should the principle which regulates

human conduct not be applied to the divine? Is there such a difference between the relations we bear to each other, and those we bear to our Maker? He calls them by the very same names. "If I be a father," says he, "where is mine honor; if I be a master, where is my fear?" (Mal. i. 6.) Does he profess to act upon principles different from ours? So far from it, that he draws illustrations from our own conduct to convict us of sin against him; and even calls us in to be judges in the controversy which he maintains with men. "Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard: what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isai. v. 3. 4.) Nay, he frames his very law by the same rule; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, *with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy* STRENGTH." (Mark xii.30.)

The import of the last quoted passage is especially worthy of observation. Upon a careful perusal of it, the reader will clearly see that the law of God, in its utmost latitude, and in its highest interpretation, demands nothing more than our *strength;* and that God himself—not man—has made this the exact measure and standard of his requirements. It is moreover evident, from the language here employed, that our Maker considers our *strength* for the performance of what he requires to lie in the *possession of our intelligent faculties;* in strict accordance with which idea, he calls upon us to love

him with all our *heart*, with all our *soul*, and with all our *mind*." An opinion has been entertained in some quarters, that our first parents, to whom this declaration of God's law was given, had strength equal to its performance, but that their depraved descendants have not. We conceive, however, that the words of our Lord, above quoted, express the law as given to man depraved, as well as to man in innocence. If they do not, then the law of God must have undergone a change with the condition of man; and we ask, what change? And what is the law now? And where are the scriptural authorities for such a view? We know of none, nor can we conceive that any serious attempt will be made to maintain such a position. But if this be the law as now given to us, let it be observed that it takes for the measure of its demands, not the strength of our first parents, or of a state of innocence, but our actual and present strength: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy strength*." Such is its language to every individual; varying, therefore, with all variations of strength, if such there be, and making the strength of every man the measure of the obedience which God requires from him.

But suppose this is not held to be the principle of the divine government, and that, in relation to God, a man is to be blamed for doing what he had not power to avoid, or for not doing what he had not power to perform; suppose it admitted that God's right to command is not limited by man's ability to

obey, and that he exacts labour beyond our strength, the justice of all which is to be consigned (as well it may) to mystery now, and to be cleared up at a future day:—what is the consequence of this? We inevitably associate the character of the most blessed with what is evil and base in our estimation; we place him in the same rank with unreasonable and cruel men, with unrighteous and merciless task-masters, and even with the cruel monarch, whose similar conduct, in requiring bricks without straw, is held up to the universal execration of men, and aroused the indignant vengeance of heaven. We set up religion in direct opposition to the common sense and indestructible principles of mankind. We tell them what they never can believe, and what, if they could believe, it would only increase their enmity to God; what is adapted to attach scorn to professions of justice, and turns declarations of mercy into ridicule. That these effects are not produced in pious minds we allow, but they are produced to a most deplorable extent in the minds of the ungodly; they naturally and justly follow from the premises, and not at all the less so because they are left to slumber in some persons, under the general plea that the subject is mysterious. We maintain that it is not at all mysterious, and should be greatly astonished indeed if the Almighty had left in mystery any thing by which his name could be so dishonored. The mysteries of religion are things above reason, not things contrary to it; nor can they be so, for none such are there in religion to conceal. We

can conceive no argument to be plainer or more decisive than this: God holds us justly responsible; proportionate power is necessary to just responsibility; therefore, we have power to be and to do all that for which God holds us responsible.

If we examine the nature of the power which is considered necessary to just responsibility among men, we shall find it to be precisely that which we all possess in relation to God. It is the possession of means. A man is blamed or punished for not paying his debts, who has the means of doing so, that is, money, within his reach; and the same in every other case. According to the view we have taken of the structure and operation of the mind, we have the means of being all that God expects us to be; or, in other words, we have the power of being so. Taking, therefore, the same ground which satisfies every one of the justice of responsibility among men, we find justice equally manifest in our responsibility to God: why should any thing additional be desired in this case? Are we dissatisfied with this state of things?

The argument we have just drawn from the principle of responsibility is greatly strengthened, by adverting to the *awful magnitude of the consequences which the Supreme Governor has attached to disobedience.* In a case in which the result in suspense was trivial, it might be comparatively unimportant to be scrupulous about the principle. But in the case before us the issue is most momentous. The futurity which is to be decided according to

our present conduct, comprehends by far the most important portion of our being, its highest joys or its deepest sorrows; they are joys and sorrows, for the description of which all sources of earthly illustration have been employed, nay, they have been exhausted, and yet they have been proved inadequate; they are to be imparted by God's own hand, then, unrestrained, and acting with an energy therefore altogether beyond conception; and finally, they are to be perpetual, admitting, throughout all eternity, of no change but augmentation, according to their respective natures. Is the ground upon which I am subjected to one of the alternatives of *such* a destiny to be concealed from me?

Nor is this all. In the infliction of indignation so terrible upon his creatures, it is of the utmost moment that the character of God should be cleared of every dark suspicion, by a most vivid and irresistible conviction in the mind of every sinner of the justice of his doom; and this not merely at the time of its endurance, when it can be of no use to him; but during the *time of probation*, when it might exercise a beneficial influence on his course. To imagine that, when such issues as these are suspended on the event, God should have so trifled with immortal creatures, and *his* creatures too, as to say, I will deal with you according to your character, when they have no power to form that character to good or ill, is afflictive beyond all sufferance; nor can a sentiment which involves this consequence ultimately stand. "God forbid: for

then how shall God judge the world?" (Romans iii. 6.)

It has sometimes been conceived sufficient to say that the supposed mystery attending the responsibility of man *will be cleared up hereafter*, and that *no doubt will be entertained of it at the judgment day*. Most unquestionably this is a truth; but a truth which no way tends to lessen the importance of satisfactory information on the same subject now. The justice of his responsibility is a thing which should obviously be made apparent to a sinner, *not merely at the time of his punishment*, to silence him in his sufferings, but *during the period of his probation*, to quicken him in his escape. To suppose knowledge communicated *then* which is not accessible *now*, is to suppose the existence of a new case, in which no probation is granted, but punishment inflicted without opportunity of refuge. It would enable a sinner to say, *If I could have known this before, I might have been a different man:* whereas the equitable character of the final judgment obviously lies in its simply carrying out the principles of the probationary state, and rewarding every man according to that which he might have known, as determining the character of that which he has done. We have no need to hesitate in saying, therefore, that the grounds exhibited as those of our responsibility hereafter, must be precisely the same as those exhibited now; and that if the subject be mysterious in this world, it can receive no elucidation in the next.

Another method by which it has been conceived reconcilable with common sense that God should so awfully punish men for not doing what they have not power to do, is by such a statement as follows: *Though man has not power to repent and turn to God of himself, yet God is willing to give him power, having promised to impart his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. Now*, it is continued, *man has power to ask for the Spirit, and he ought to pray for it, in which case he would have power bestowed for all the rest of his duty.*

It is an undoubted truth that God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and it is a most blessed encouragement to us under the experience of our desperate depravity; but the preceding statement is liable to several objections.

It proceeds upon the assumption of a totally inadmissible principle, namely, that *repentance may be a sinner's duty at the time that he has not power to perform it.* If power should be imparted, whether by the Holy Spirit or in any other method, then unquestionably it would be his duty; but this idea of praying for power to repent implies that the obligation of repentance exists *before* the power is received, which we conceive to be impossible and absurd.

This assumption is also contradicted by a part of the statement itself. *A man can pray*, it is alleged, *and therefore he ought to pray, and will be justly blameable if he do not.* Most admirable and undeniable! But the converse surely follows, that as

man *cannot repent*, he is under *no obligation to repent*, and for impenitence is *liable to no condemnation*. Else it might be equally affirmed that men ought to pray though they could not pray, which this hypothesis very carefully and very wisely avoids. Yet why should we be more willing to say that they ought to repent when they cannot repent? Is not the principle in both cases the same? The statement shows an apparent desire to avoid this inconsistency; yet by this very principle it destroys itself. Indeed error is always a suicide.

Further, *upon the hypothesis under consideration, the direct and immediate obligation of a sinner is to pray*, and not to repent, to turn to God, or to believe in Christ, for all which he has no power, and which therefore it were vain to attempt to perform. His duty is merely to pray that power may be given him for these ends. We conceive this to be a perversion of the aspect of scriptural exhortation, and a striking deviation from the address of the gospel. We know, indeed, that Simon was exhorted to pray, but it was for pardon of sin, not for the Holy Spirit; and besides, the encouragement to pray came after an exhortation to repent. See Acts viii. 22. And this is the uniform address of the gospel. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. God now commandeth all men every where to repent. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Acts iii. 19. Luke xiii. 3. Acts xvii. 30. Mark i. 15.) This is required of sinners as their *first and immediate duty*, without the

intervention of any other act. The address of our brethren, however, must be of a totally different kind. It must be to this effect: "We do not exhort you to repentance, or conversion, or faith in Christ, because you have not power to perform them; but we exhort you to pray. You *can* pray. Pray, therefore, for the Holy Spirit to enable you to repent." Now we ask where the pattern of this address is in the holy scriptures? Or, if there be none, by what authority is it introduced, to modify and supersede the wisdom and power of God? Can any thing more effectually condemn a hypothesis, than its compelling its advocates to abandon so principal a feature of the divine word? This verily is "another gospel."*

*As the sentiments here expressed respecting prayer for the Spirit have been represented as supporting those to which they are in fact directly opposed, it affords the writer great satisfaction to present proof that the views of the most successful opponent in his day of those sentiments which are now propagating so extensively on this side the atlantic, accorded with those of the author of this work

"It is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but *it is at our* PERIL *to* EXHORT *them to any thing short of it, or which does not* INVOLVE *or* IMPLY *it.* I am aware that such an idea may startle many of our readers, and some who are engaged in the christian ministry. We have sunk into such a compromising way of dealing with the unconverted as to have well nigh lost the spirit of the primitive preachers; and hence it is that sinners, of every description, can sit so quietly as they do, year after year, in our places of worship. It was not so with the hearers of Peter and Paul. They were either "pricked in the heart" in one way, or "cut to the heart" in another. Their preaching commended itself to "every man's conscience in the sight of God." How shall we account for this difference? Is there not some important error or defect in our ministrations?

There is here also another inconsistency. The statement supposes a man to pray for power to repent; that is, *to pray before he repents*, or, which is the same thing, *to pray in impenitence and unbe-*

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have no reference to the preaching of those who disown the divinity or atonement of Christ, on the one hand, whose sermons are little more than harangues on morality, nor to that of gross Antinomians on the other, whose chief business it is to feed the vanity and malignity of one part of their audience, and the sin-extenuating principles of the other. These are errors the folly of which is "manifest to all men" who pay any serious regard to the religion of the New Testament. I refer to those who are commonly reputed 'evangelical' and who approve of addresses to the unconverted. I hope no apology is necessary for an attempt to exhibit the scriptural manner of preaching. If it affects the labors of some of my brethren, I cannot deny but that it may also affect my own. I conceive there is scarcely a minister amongst us whose preaching has not been more or less influenced by the lethargic systems of the age.

Christ and his apostles, without any hesitation, called on sinners to "repent, and believe the gospel;" but we, considering them as poor, impotent, and depraved creatures, have been disposed to drop this part of the christian ministry.—Some may have felt afraid of being accounted legal; others have really thought it inconsistent. Considering such things as beyond the power of their hearers, they seem to have contented themselves with pressing on them things which they could perform, still continuing the enemies of Christ; such as behaving decently in society, reading the scriptures, and attending the means of grace. Thus it is that hearers of this description sit at ease in our congregations. Having done their duty, the minister has nothing more to say to them: unless, indeed, it be to tell them, occasionally, that something more is necessary to salvation. But, as this implies no guilt on their part, they sit unconcerned, conceiving that all that is required of them is "to lie in the way, and to wait the Lord's time." But is this the religion of the scriptures? Where does it appear that the prophets or apostles ever treated that kind of inability which is merely the effect of reigning aversion as affording any excuse? And where have they descended, in their exhortations, to things which might be done and the parties still continue the enemies of God? Instead of leaving out every thing of a spi-

lief. What sort of prayer can this be? Or what acceptance can it find with God? Can any supplication be grateful to him from a man who is yet an enemy to him, or any which is not presented in a

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ritual nature, because their hearers could not find in their hearts to comply with it, it may safely be affirmed they exhorted to nothing else; treating such inability not only as of no account, with regard to the reasoning of obligation, but as rendering the subject of it worthy of the severest rebuke.

There is another species of preaching which proceeds upon much the same principle. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are allowed to be duties; but not immediate duties. The sinner is considered as unable to comply with them, and therefore they are not urged upon him; but instead of them he is directed to "pray for the Holy Spirit, to enable him to repent and believe;" and this it seems he can do, notwithstanding the aversion of his heart from every thing of the kind. But, if any man be required to pray for the Holy Spirit, it must be either sincerely, and in the name of Jesus; or insincerely, and in some other way. The latter I suppose will be allowed to be an abomination in the sight of God; he cannot therefore be required to do this; and, as to the former, it is just as difficult and as opposite to the carnal heart as repentance and faith themselves. Indeed, it amounts to the same thing; for a sincere desire after a spiritual blessing presented in the name of Jesus is no other than "the prayer of faith."

Peter exhorted Simon to pray, not with an impenitent heart that he might obtain repentance, but with a penitent one that he might obtain forgiveness; and this no doubt in the only way in which it was to be obtained, "through Jesus Christ." "Repent," saith he, "and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Our Saviour directed his disciples to pray for the "Holy Spirit:" but surely the prayer which they were encouraged to offer was to be sincere, and with an eye to the Saviour; that is, it was "the prayer of faith," and therefore could not be a duty directed to be performed antecedently and in order to the obtaining of it.

The mischief arising from this way of preaching is considerable. First: it gives up a very important question to the sinner, even that question which is at issue between God and conscience on the one hand, and a self-righteous heart on the other: namely, whether he be obliged immediately to re-

Saviour's name? Yet if a man prays in the name of Christ, or as a friend to God, he is no longer in unbelief or impenitence; he has both repented and believed, at the very moment when he is praying for power to do so.

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pent and believe the gospel. "I could find nothing in the scriptures," says he, "that would give me any comfort in my present condition; nothing short of 'repent and believe,' which are things I cannot comply with: but I have gained it from my good minister. Now my heart is at ease. I am not obliged immediately to repent and sue for mercy in the name of Jesus. It is not therefore my sin that I do not. All I am obliged to is to pray God to help me to do so; and that I do." Thus, after a bitter conflict with scripture and conscience, which have pursued him through all his windings and pressed upon him the call of the gospel, he finds a shelter in the house of God! Such counsel, instead of aiding the sinner's convictions, [which, as "laborers with God," is our proper business,] has many a time been equal to a victory over them, or at least to the purchase of an armistice. Secondly: It deceives the soul. He understands it as a compromise, and so acts upon it. For though he be in fact as far from sincerely praying for repentance as from repenting, and just as unable to desire faith in Christ as to exercise it, yet he does not think so. He reckons himself very desirous of those things. The reason is, he takes that indirect desire after them, which consists in wishing to be converted, (or any thing, however disagreeable in itself) that he may escape the wrath to come, to be the desire of grace; and, being conscious of possessing this, he considers himself in a fair way at least of being converted. Thus he deceives his soul; and thus he is helped forward to his destruction! Nor is this all: he feels himself set at liberty from the hard requirement of returning immediately to God by Jesus Christ, as utterly unworthy; and, being told to pray that he may be enabled to do so, he supposes that such prayer will avail him, or that God will give him the power of repenting and believing in answer to his prayers: prayers, be it observed, which must necessarily be offered up with an impenitent unbelieving heart. This just suits his self-righteous spirit: but alas, all is delusion!

"You have no relief then," say some, "for the sinner." I answer, if the gospel or any of its blessings will relieve him there is no want of relief. But if there be nothing in Christ,

But let us look yet a little more narrowly at that which a sinner, on this supposition, is exhorted to do. He is urged to pray; for what? not for pardon, nor for deliverance from the wrath to come; nor for peace of conscience, or purity of heart; but for *power*. For *power?* Why power is the very thing which creates both his responsibility and his danger, and is the last thing in the world which a wicked man would wish to possess. Nothing can be more gratifying to him than to learn that he has no power to repent, since he may then be quite certain that it cannot be his duty, and that the neglect of it cannot expose him to any just condemnation. This is just as he would have it: and if you tell him that in a certain quarter he may obtain power, his reply might naturally be, "I would rather not obtain it; it would impose upon me new duties,

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or grace, or heaven, that will suit his inclination, it is not for me to furnish him with any thing else, or to encourage him to hope that things will come to a good issue. The only possible way of relieving a sinner, while his heart is averse from God, is by lowering the requirements of heaven to meet his inclination; or in some way to model the gospel to his mind. But to relieve him in this manner is at my peril. If I were commissioned to address a company of men who had engaged in an unprovoked rebellion against their king and country, what ought I to say to them? I might make use of authority or entreaty, as occasion might require; I might caution, warn, threaten, or persuade them; but there would be a point from which I must not depart, Be ye reconciled to your rightful sovereign; lay down arms and submit to mercy! To this I must inviolably adhere. They might allege that they could not comply with such hard terms. Should I admit their plea, and direct them only to such conduct as might consist with a rebellious spirit, instead of recovering them from rebellion, I should go far towards denominating myself a rebel.

and create fearful responsibilities, which I am very happy to avoid." This strange notion, therefore, makes it dependent upon man himself whether he will have power or not; and leaves it to a sinner by never praying for power, to exclude himself from ever being answerable to God for his impenitence.

But we have not yet done. We should like to know *upon what grounds it is affirmed that a sinner can pray.* Any available or acceptable prayer, or in other words, any *real* prayer, must be in spirit and in truth; it must express the state of the heart. Now such a state of heart as would be expressed in prayer for the Holy Spirit, would certainly be totally dissimilar to the ordinary and previous state of a sinner's mind. If he has power to pray for the Spirit, therefore, he has power to produce this change in the state of his mind. But this change is of the same nature, and as great in degree, as that implied in repenting of sin and turning to God; and if a sinner has power for the one, how has he not power for the other? Besides, does not the fact of praying for the Spirit inevitably carry with it the idea of repentance and reconciliation to God? Can we conceive of a man still loving iniquity and hating God, pouring out his heart in breathings after the humbling and soul-subduing influences of the heavenly dove?

It requires to be asked, moreover, *whether sinners really have the power to pray.* We, of course, believe that they have; but we are convinced that

they have it in no other sense than that in which they have also power to repent. The passages of scripture and other arguments which are brought to show that men have not power to repent, would equally demonstrate that they have not power to pray. "Without me," says our Lord, "ye can do *nothing*:" (John xv. 5.) Why is prayer made an exception to this declaration? In the very same sense in which men cannot repent, they cannot pray; the hindrances to both are precisely of the same character, and of equally certain operation; nor can it be less derogatory to the Holy Spirit to imagine that men can pray without his aid, than that without it they can repent. In affirming that men can pray, our brethren are guilty of the same violations of scripture, the same inconsistencies, and other evils, charged upon us in saying that men can repent; they cannot therefore reasonably accuse us, nor do we attempt to criminate them. We believe the doctrine of man's entire ability for his duty to harmonize with the whole of scripture: and they, who admit it in one point without answering the end they desire, may just as easily, and much more satisfactorily, admit it in all.

It has sometimes been said in reference to the commands of God, that *man is not called to obey them in his own strength;* and hence it is inferred, that the utterance of commands does not necessarily imply the existence of power to fulfil them.

This singular representation appears to be founded upon the fact, that the blessed God, having

foreseen and foretold the melancholy and certain influence of our evil disposition, has encouraged us to pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit, in order to quicken and lead us in our duty. This is a most gracious and important part of the divine administration of mercy, and one which we should be extremely sorry to overlook or to obscure; yet we conceive that it affords no ground for the objection derived from it.

In the first place, it is obvious that *the commands of God are addressed to man as he is*, and not to man *as he is not*. If otherwise, then they are not addressed to man at all, but to a being in some state in which *he* is not; nor can they ever have any bearing upon him, but on the supposition of his coming some time into the state of superadded strength which they contemplate. It seems evident, however, that no such qualification as this is attached to any of God's commandments. They are uniformly addressed to man as he is, without the slightest intimation that obedience is not required until he obtains additional power to obey; on the contrary, from the moment they are understood their obligation begins, while every act of disobedience is reckoned a sin, and will meet its reward. If man is not called to obey in his own strength, he should not be required to obey *while he has no strength but his own*: the additional strength which obedience requires should be issued simultaneously with the command. But neither is this the case; since it is manifest that the commands of God are

laid upon men for a long period before the Holy Spirit, which is supposed to convey the additional strength, is communicated. Besides, if God does not call men to obey in their own strength, then the strength which he does require them to use should be communicated by him *unsought*, and not only *promised in answer to prayer:* and in cases in which that strength is never given, it follows that he never calls for obedience at all. The only thing which, upon this principle, he can be said to require, is prayer, and *prayer for strength:* which is never enjoined, though many other things are which this imagination supersedes; and which, moreover, is quite as much *beyond our own strength* as any other spiritual exercise, and therefore ought as little to be required, until the additional strength is given which we are thus expected to seek. It may be added that the objection quite overlooks the fact, which we have elsewhere noticed, that God actually makes our own strength the measure of his demands; for thus it stands in the grand expression of his law, and the same qualification doubtless attaches to every individual precept of it, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy strength.*" And if the whole that he requires be that to which our own strength is competent, why should he wait for obedience till we acquire more strength than our own?

In the next place, we do not see how the condescending kindness of God in encouraging us to pray for his Holy Spirit at all countenances the idea that

he does not call us to obey in our own strength.—For, in truth, the operation of the blessed Spirit has no relation to our strength, but solely to our disposition. Our strength to do the will of God consists in the possession of our rational faculties, which we have, if we are sane, independently of gracious influence; that which hinders us is a wrong disposition, and for the correction of this the Spirit's aid is to be implored. His object is not to impart strength, but to inspire resolution; so that even if it were true, which it is not, that God does not require us to obey without the Spirit, still it could not be said that he calls for no obedience in our own strength. Even when he gives the Spirit, he gives no more strength; and if, therefore, we are ever called upon to obey his will, in our own strength, and in that alone, it must be. Besides, when we come to pray for the help of the Spirit in order that we may obey our Maker's commands, what does this very act and attitude imply? Surely, that obedience to these commands is our duty, whether we obtain the aid that we seek or not. If it be not our duty, why should we seek help to perform it? Our doing so seems clearly to indicate that we have felt ourselves called upon to render obedience before we came to the throne of grace, and that, finding impediments, we are come for relief: but, if it be true that we are not called upon to obey while we have only our own strength, then we have been labouring under a delusion, and ought rather to return from the mercy-seat with this

consolation, that, until strength is given, we are not expected to obey. The truth is, that, by encouragements to pray for the Spirit, God is making no allowance for supposed weakness, but showing himself willing not to abandon us to our wickedness, He requires obedience of us as we are; and if we find resistance from a desperate heart, he permits us to hope that he will take even that away.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the divine use of means independently of the Holy Spirit:—The argument from the limited communication of the Spirit.

We have already adverted to the fact, that what is, on one hand, ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit, is, on the other, enjoined upon man as his duty; and hence we have inferred the power of man to perform it. But we may go further than this. God has not only issued commands; *he has also used a variety of means to induce us to comply with them.* Of this character are all the invitations and promises, the warnings and threatenings, the doctrines and examples, contained in holy scripture; all of them addressed to the understanding, and in

some way or other appealing to the heart, and constituting together an immense apparatus of motive and persuasion. Many of these portions of holy writ are unquestionably directed specifically to ungodly men, and, by shewing the necessity, reasonableness, importance, and blessedness of conversion, adapted to lead men to repentance. Such passages are also, obviously, of no limited application, but are addressed to sinners generally, and therefore to sinners universally; so that, wherever the knowledge of the gospel comes, a system of persuasive means is immediately put into operation upon every person of sane mind.

This system of means plainly does not imply, or comprehend, as in its own nature, any communication of the Holy Spirit to the parties on whom it bears. Some, indeed, have conceived that there is a dispensation of the Spirit co-extensive with the means of religious knowledge, a measure of his blessed influence being given to every man, to make the best use of it for his own welfare; a sentiment into which we need not at present enter more fully than to say, that we see in it neither doctrinal truth, nor practical value. On the contrary, we apprehend that, as, on the one hand, the scriptures declare the influence of the Spirit to be productive of the fruits of the Spirit; so, on the other, the measure in which such fruits are actually produced clearly and indubitably describes the extent to which his influences have been received. If this be the case, and we shall assume it for the present without further ar-

gument, the communication of the Spirit is not universal, even where gospel privileges are enjoyed; since it is manifest that not all who enjoy them are converted to God. In such circumstances, however, the use of means is still universal, the truths of God's word, which are adapted to lead to repentance, bearing upon every man alike. Hence, therefore, it appears, that the communication of the Spirit and the use of means are not co-extensive; and that while there is one portion of mankind who enjoy both these favours, there is another who possess only one of them, namely, the means of persuasion, being left without the influences of the Holy Ghost.

Let us dwell for a moment upon this state of things, remembering that it is no accident, no mistake; that it is not found where diverse agencies might have given rise to unexpected incongruities; but that it exists in the administration of God himself, and therefore is stamped with the previous knowledge, deliberate design, and perfect wisdom which characterize all his works.

To what circumstances, then, is the use of means adapted or appropriate? Clearly, to none but those in which there is an apparent possibility of their success. In sickness, for example, it is a general maxim, that while there is life there is hope; and physicians accordingly continue their exertions, with however little expectation of a cure, till life expires; but was any one ever so absurd as to perpetuate the use of means after it was ascertained that life was, extinct? So accurately is the principle acted upon

as to establish some remarkable exceptions to the general rule; inasmuch as in cases of pulmonary consumption, for instance, it is now known that after a certain point of its progress, recovery is hopeless, and at that point the application of all medicines is suspended, excepting such as may mitigate sufferings which death only can terminate. To every case of the employment of means the same principle extends; and if there be any readers of this book who would not feel themselves guilty of absurdity in making efforts for an object when they *knew there was no possibility of success*, they, but they alone, may deny the conclusion to which we are tending.

If a possibility of success be necessary to the appropriate use of means in the abstract, it must be so, whether those means be employed by human agents or divine: the objects contemplated may differ, and the means devised; but the principle of *the practicability of the end by the means devised*, is alike essential to the wisdom of both. But if this be the case, then it inevitably follows, that it is possible for sinners to be converted by the means instituted for this end, namely, by means of persuasion, without the influence of the Holy Spirit; otherwise God would have resorted to the use of means without propriety or wisdom, which is not to be supposed.

Should any reader here be startled by recollecting how expressly our Lord declares this to be impossible, the author begs to refer to a following chapter, in which the meaning of that and its kindred terms

will be fully, and he hopes candidly investigated. At present, let the train of reasoning which is before us be frankly pursued, and *if the idea is to be retained, that the Almighty is attempting to accomplish by the use of persuasion what it is impossible so to achieve, let us fairly observe the attitude in which we place him.* We set his administration in this respect on a level with absurd and irrational actions. It is like the conduct of a man who should exhaust his wealth upon speculations from which he knew he could derive no return,—a wasteful expenditure of his resources. It is like the effort of a man attempting to lift a mountain in his hand,—a ridiculous application of his strength. It is like reasoning with the wind, or expostulating with a stone. Can any one think thus of his Maker?

The difficulty of entertaining such ideas has led some to imagine, *that God never intended the means he has employed to answer the end for which they are apparently designed;* an opinion which has been strengthened by the observation, that none of God's designs can fail of their accomplishment. Of this argument we shall speak presently; let us first observe the extraordinary predicament into which it brings the adorable being on whose behalf it is produced.

We are to conceive, then, that the blessed God uses means adapted to an end, without any design to accomplish that end. Now it may be observed, in the first place, that *this immediately stultifies our ordinary mode of reasoning.* When we see a per-

son adopting means conducive to an end, we uniformly and inevitably conclude that he designs to accomplish that end, or at least to do something towards it: thus when a man excavates the ground, and collects bricks or other materials, can any body help concluding that he intends to build? We have no such certain method of judging of the intention of others as by the tendency and adaptation of their actions; and if it be of any importance at all to ascertain the designs of God, as in some respects we suppose it is, we can scarcely avoid estimating them by the same rule. Or, secondly, *If the designs of God may not be inferred from the adaptation of his actions, it attaches a melancholy stigma to his character.* A man who makes preparations as though he meant to do one thing, and all the while means to do another, either does not know his own mind, or he proceeds in a way of concealment and deceit; he is either a fool or a knave. If, as we most deeply feel, such imputations must be infinitely remote from the Most High, must not such conduct also? It is certain, at all events, that, in instituting means for the conversion of sinners, he *seems* to have this design; it is certain, too, that, as he has constituted us to infer design from the apparent tendency of actions, he knows we shall conceive him to have this design; and if it shall ultimately turn out that he had no such design, what can possibly result from the institution of these means, but delusion to us, and mockery to himself?

Besides, *look at the nature and extent of the means*

themselves. How solemnly and awfully he speaks! With what a vehemence of affection and importunity he pleads! From what a compass the topics are adduced which are employed to persuade, and how much do they comprehend of the most attractive and the most terrible that can appeal to the heart of man! Think of the patience, the perseverance, the solicitude, with which all these means are employed, while God himself looks on, with urgent yet suspended wrath, saying, "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim!" *Could he have done more if he really had intended to persuade?*

Nor should we forget that *criminality is attached to the failure of the means employed.* If the Almighty had not intended them as means of conversion, one would think he could find little cause of complaint in the fact that none were converted by them: why is he angry at this, if he never meant they should be so? He *is* angry, nevertheless, with the wicked every day, and, "*if ye turn not,* he will whet his sword." Ps. vii. 12. When "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," it will be to "take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel." 2 Thess. i. 8. But why, if the gospel was not meant to be obeyed? The displeasure of God surely can have no foundation but the contradiction of his will, and no measure but the degree in which sinners have been guilty of it. Whatever justice or reasonableness there is admitted to be, therefore, in the punishment of the impenitent, there is just as

much proof of the intention of God that they should repent at his call.

But *none of the designs of God*, it is said, *can be frustrated:* and so, for the thousandth time, is an apparent truth converted into a real error.

There are two characters or capacities in which God acts: in the one he appears as a sovereign agent, accomplishing all his pleasure; in the other as a moral governor, submitting himself, within certain limits, to the pleasure of others. The latter idea is necessarily involved in the creation of rational beings, who may or may not, honour their Maker by obeying his commands, or accomplishing his will.—There is manifestly, therefore, a wide difference between *the legislative will of God, and his absolute will;* between his design respecting what others should do, and his design respecting what he will do himself. The accomplishment of the latter is absolutely certain, the former is liable to frustration. And this state of things involves no dishonour to God; because, whatever the conduct of his creatures may be, however they may choose to disobey and dishonour him, there are ultimate measures of wrath, by taking which his name and glory will be fully vindicated.

Seeing therefore that there is a most just and important sense in which it may be affirmed that God's will may be resisted and his designs frustrated, namely, in reference to the whole of his legislative administration, it may correctly be maintained to be his will that men should repent at his call, even

though none of them do so. No other part of his will is frustrated herein, than such as the very nature of his government renders liable to this result.

It may perhaps be conceived that the fact that none are converted without the influence of the Spirit, a fact which the author most fully and unequivocally maintains, *authorizes the inference that the means were not intended for their apparent end.* Would the Almighty, it may be said, institute a magnificent apparatus as means of conversion, by which he foreknew that none would be converted?

This question involves a principle which applies to all instances of probationary administration. *Can it be wise and worthy of God to make an experiment which he knows will fail?* Let his own conduct answer. The experiment made with our first parents in the garden of Eden was just such an one; yet he did make it, and he may therefore make another on a similar principle. Or let the nature of the case answer. May there not be other results, for the production of which the experiment may be worth while, although that particular result should not arise? He must have great confidence in his own judgment who would undertake to answer this question in the negative; and until it is so answered, and upon sufficient authority, the way is quite open for conceiving that God may have instituted means of conversion, and intended them as such, although no sinner should be converted by them.

We might ask, indeed, *If the invitations and warnings of holy writ were not intended as means of con-*

version, for what were they intended? The importance of answering this question has been felt by those who hold the opinion we are combating, but it seems to have been found somewhat difficult to answer it satisfactorily. It is, we are told, *to leave sinners without excuse.* Strange assertion! It is then to be supposed that, *if it were not for the warnings and invitations of the gospel, sinners would have an excuse for their sins!* This is a startling proposition to set out with, verily; but it is nothing to what follows, namely, that the gospel is given to take this excuse away, and for no other end! If this be the case, it must be confessed that the gospel has been grievously misunderstood. It has been imagined to have an aspect of favour, to come with a message of mercy, to be glad tidings of great joy, the grace of God bringing salvation: but, according to this notion, it brings nothing but guilt, misery, and wrath. *Before it comes, men have a valid excuse for their sins,* one which makes it impossible for God to punish them justly, and which will certainly exempt them, therefore, from any punishment at all: but, *after the gospel comes, this excuse is taken away;* then they begin to be chargeable with guilt, and liable to misery, and *the publication of the gospel itself is a mere contrivance of his, that he might be able to condemn justly wretches whom he was otherwise determined to destroy!*

Scarcely less extraordinary is *the method* by which the sinner's excuse is to be taken away. If indeed, he being already guilty and exposed to ruin, *a door*

of hope is really set before him, then he will have no excuse if he should ultimately perish; and this is exactly the state of things for which we contend. But nothing of this sort is admitted by our companions in argument. They will have the sinner's excuse taken away *without salvation having been put into his power;* as though the *semblance* of it were enough to insure this melancholy end, and the whole affair was characterized by a systematic hypocrisy, which it is astonishing that any man could devise, and yet more astonishing that he could attribute to his Maker.

The truth which we have thus been endeavouring to establish, is *that the warnings and invitations of the gospel are used by the Almighty as* sincere *means of conversion.* If this be admitted, we conceive it to follow that *those whom means are used to lead to repentance have power to repent, the use of means being otherwise absurd.*

To what has been said we may add, that *the means employed possess a perfect and manifest adaptation to the faculties of man in their natural state, irrespectively of the influence of the Holy Spirit.* We have seen that man's heart is wrought upon by means of the understanding, according to the tendency of the objects presented to it; and we find that the means instituted by God for the conversion of sinners are in perfect accordance with this constitution, and require nothing more to give them efficiency. He presents truths to the understanding, adapted and sufficient to induce repentance; and

according to the structure of the mind, the consideration of those truths would infallibly lead to the result they are adapted to produce. The apparatus, therefore, is framed without a regard to the influence of the Holy Spirit; as a system of means, it is perfect and complete without this appendage, and is sure of success by itself, unless some cause prevents the natural and ordinary action of the mind.

The opinion, to which we briefly referred at the commencement of this chapter, that a measure of the Spirit's influence is given to every man who comes within the knowledge of the gospel, has arisen from a conviction of the necessity of admitting power in man, as well as the use of means by God; but, as man is conceived by this school of divines to have no power of himself, it must be given to him, and hence the hypothesis of the universal dispensation of the Spirit. With regard to this scheme of doctrine, we might well be content with the testimony which it bears to the general principle we have advocated; but we may observe in passing, that, if the constitution of our intelligent and moral nature be such as has been described, the supposition of the universal influence of the Spirit is altogether needless. It is only conceived to put a man into such a condition of strength, that, as to religion, he *may do what he pleases;* but in the very same condition we have shown man to be *without supernatural aid.* To what end, therefore, is the introduction of an agent in this respect unnecessary?

CHAP. IX.

Whether the Holy Spirit is a gift of justice, or of grace:—The argument from the gracious and sovereign character of the Holy Spirit.

Having contemplated the condition of those to whom God does not impart the influences of his Spirit, let us briefly survey that of the more favoured portion of mankind, on whom this inestimable blessing is bestowed. Judging by the fruits, there are manifestly some into whose hearts this divine agent is commissioned to enter: in what light are we led to regard this gift, by the oracles of truth? *If the communication of the Spirit is necessary to impart power to men to perform their duty, then we may expect to find it spoken of as a matter of equitable administration, as a thing due to men, inasmuch as there can be no equitable responsibility without commensurate power: but if, on the other hand, we should find it described as altogether a matter of grace and favour, and one respecting which God acts according to his sovereign pleasure, then we may not unreasonably conclude that it is not necessary to the just responsibility, or to the power of man.* An examination of the holy scriptures will readily decide this question.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, we apprehend, is in-

variably spoken of as *an act of grace, of rich and boundless grace.*

1. This may be inferred from the passages which represent *mankind in their natural state, and independently of any communication of the Spirit, as in a state of entire unworthiness and just condemnation;* Rom. i. 18, *et seq.* ii. *passim.* So that any good thing given them must be of mercy, or free favour. But the Holy Spirit is not only a good thing, but one of the best things which the eternal Father has to bestow; wherefore it is of grace.

2. It appears also from the fact, that *the gift of the Spirit is a part of the work of redemption;* which is uniformly represented as originating in the free grace of God alone, and as characterized by it in all its parts. Now if the gift of the Spirit be a part of this dispensation, it must partake of its general and essential character of grace.

3. The same conclusion may be drawn from *the connexion which exists between the gift of the Spirit and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is one of the fruits of his death, and could not otherwise have been bestowed. (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) But the gift of his Son is declared to be the very highest expression of the Father's love to a guilty world, John iii. 16, a gift as free as wonderful; and such therefore must be the character of every other gift which comes through this channel of mercy.

4. *The discrimination and sovereignty which appear in the dispensation of the Spirit,* lead us to the same result. *Whatever is necessary to the power of*

men to act a right part in their present state of being, God has dispensed *universally*, with an *equal*, that is, an *equitable* hand; *all that may be given to men over and above this measure of good*, he considers as forming a department subject to his *unequal and discretionary distribution*, in relation to which, while he gives to every man severally as he will, he says to every other man, "Friend, I do thee no wrong: may I not do what I will with mine own?" (Matt. xx. 13.) No conclusion can be more easy or more safe, therefore, than this; that, respecting whatever gift the blessed God uses sovereignty, giving it to some and not to others, that gift is not necessary to the power of man to secure his own welfare. It is plain, however, that God has used sovereignty in the gift of his Spirit, which is imparted to some and not to others; wherefore we maintain that the gift of the Spirit is not necessary to man's power for his duty.

5. *Love, or kindness, is declared, also, to be the prevailing motive and character of the Spirit himself in his gracious operations.* Hence, the apostle speaks of "the love of the Spirit:" Rom. xv. 30, and the sacred writers generally represent the enjoyment of his influences as a matter of the highest thankfulness and praise.

If therefore, the communication of the Spirit is thus, without exception, described as arising from the free grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we conclude that it is not requisite to human power, or just responsibility.

. ome, who maintain the reverse of this conclusion, have been led also to question the premises, and to assert, with more or less distinctness, that, as a measure of the Spirit's influence is essential to enable every man to do his duty, so God is bound to give it to every man for this end; that such a help is due to our present condition; and that he could not justly judge and punish us, as fallen creatures, without previously restoring us to such a state of power. This is a fair specimen of the weight with which this sentiment bears upon every portion of divine truth; a sentiment not more mischievous in sapping the foundation of human responsibility, than it is injurious to the lustre of divine sovereignty. That the gift of the Spirit is in any measure due to man, is one of the last things which, with any regard to scripture, it would seem possible to maintain; nor can it be asserted without implying the connected, but incredible idea, that God was equally bound to redeem the world, and to effect it by the death of his Son.

The writer again recollects, that there have been supposed to be some influences of the Spirit exercising the minds of men not truly converted to God. These he is not called upon either to affirm or to deny: it is enough for him to repeat the observation, that, as they have never been represented as affecting the question of a sinner's ability to repent, they are beyond the scope of the present argument.

CHAP. X.

Whether the ability of man is not maintained in the holy scriptures:—The argument from express words of sacred writ.

THE sacred scriptures are the standard and depository of all truth. They are not only a testimony, but a law; and nothing is truth which is not according to this rule. How deeply ashamed would the writer feel, if he were conscious of shrinking in the least degree from this test; or if he were fearful lest the word of God should overthrow an opinion of his! Infinitely removed be such a feeling! Welcome, thou light of heavenly wisdom, whatever shadows may disperse at thy rising!

Frequent references to the scriptures of truth have already been made: but it yet remains to notice some particular and important passages, which have not pointedly come under review.

I. We conceive, then, that *there are portions of holy writ in which the power of man is expressly asserted.*

1. Such an one occurs, Isaiah vi. 9, 10. "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and

hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." This is a plain affirmation, "Ye do hear, but do not understand, ye do see, but do not perceive." Though they did not "understand and perceive," or so consider the messages of the prophets as to be reformed by them, yet they did "hear and see," which constituted *the means*, or *the power* of doing so. They were neither blind, nor deaf.

This forcible passage, with some slight variations, is quoted by our Lord, as recorded by all the evangelists, and in one case with a modification; which throws a decisive light on the prophetic phraseology, "*Make* the heart of this people gross," &c. In John xii. 40, it is thus quoted: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." In Luke viii. 10. "That seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." In Mark iv. 12. "That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." In Matt. xiii. 14, 15, more fully: "By hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive, for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes they have closed;* lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts,

and should be converted, and I should heal them." What we wish now to be observed in this passage is the direct testimony borne to the *actual capacity of men to perceive and understand and obey the truth, although they do not. They see and hear, and they have hearts to feel: while, through cherished and determined inattention, the things declared to them are as though they neither saw nor heard them.* The mixture of literal with figurative expressions, and the occurrence of the strict and analogical use of the same term in immediate conjunction, is here very remarkable, and should carefully be observed.

2. A passage of similar bearing may be found, John ix. 39, 41. "And Jesus said, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin: but now, ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." In this passage, there is a mixed reference to the sight of the body and the state of the mind, arising from the circumstance that our Lord had just spoken to the blind man whom he had restored to sight, and had taken occasion from his cure to reprove the spiritual blindness of the Jews. "For judgment," says he, or for discrimination, "am I come into this world; that they which see not might see, (referring to the man then present, who had been restored to sight,) and that they which see might be made blind," or

might have evidence of their blindness, for which the light of my works affords a more extraordinary occasion; referring to the perverseness with which the Jews had rejected the proofs of his Messiahship, derived from that miraculous cure. These persons are distinctly described as "those who see;" but somewhat piqued at the seeming association of blindness with their names, the Pharisees who stood there asked him, "Are we blind also?" Some persons would have immediately replied, Yes, certainly; and had this been really the case, our Lord could not properly have avoided it, nor can we believe that he would have attempted it. But mark his answer: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin;" if you had not the power of appreciating the evidence of my true character afforded by this miracle, there would be nothing blameworthy in your not being convinced by it: "but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." To evade the force of this latter clause, it has been said, that our Lord is not there asserting that they did see, but only taking them at their own word, which might be false, and probably was so. But when we consider that the circumstances were such as brought the truth of the statement into immediate question, it will be evident that, if it was not true, it was by all means incumbent on their divine instructor to show its falsehood; otherwise he would have been allowing them to think it true, and thus, if it were not so, attaching his sanction to a ruinous error. Besides, he has just before plainly described them

in similar terms, as "those who see;" so that he does not merely take them at *their* word, but at his own. And, lastly, the nature and importance of the argument built upon it precludes the possibility of considering it as an error. *The fact of their seeing is made the premises for the conclusion that they were criminal.* Their saying, We see, if it were a mistake, could not authorize this conclusion; but, on the contrary, would lead to the inference that their rejection of the Messiah had no guilt in it—one of the last lessons we can conceive to have been inculcated by our Lord. The entire argument, therefore, is this: "If ye were blind ye should have no sin;" if you had not power to appreciate the evidence of my true character, you would incur no blame by rejecting me; "but now, as ye truly say, ye see;" you have all the means necessary to apprehend my glory; "therefore your sin remaineth." No words can more clearly assert that these wicked Pharisees were not blind, though they acted as if they were. *They possessed ample means, that is to say, full power, of acting otherwise; and if they had not, they would have had no sin.*

We are very well aware that, upon another occasion, our Lord represented these same persons as *blind.* (Matt. xxiii. 16, 18.) We suppose it will be maintained, however, on both sides, that this divine instructor was not guilty of contradicting himself; and if not, we must understand him to say that the Pharisees were blind only in such a sense as was consistent with their seeing; that is to say, that,

possessing the power of sight, they did not use it, but acted as though they were blind, and so remained in ignorance and sin. But of this and similar expressions we shall speak more fully presently.

3. The same truth is expressly asserted by our Lord, Matt. xiii. 12; "Because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand:" language which fully establishes the power of men to perform all the actions for which sight and hearing were given, while it touchingly complains of the guilty inattention by which instruction was rendered fruitless.

4. We mention a large portion of scripture carrying the same idea with it, when we refer to the *parables* of our Lord. Every one has been struck, not merely with their general verisimilitude and beauty, but with their minute and comprehensive accuracy. It may reasonably be expected, therefore, that in them no important feature in the character or condition of man will be omitted; or that, if not illustrated in one parable, it will be found in another. Least of all can it be supposed that a matter of such particular prominence and such vital importance as the ability or inability of man has been overlooked. Nor shall we find that it has been so.

If the power appropriate to man as a moral agent be wanting, the objects introduced emblematically to exhibit his conduct, either as to what it is, or what it ought to be, should be equally destitute of

the power appropropriate to them; otherwise the analogy necessary to the very structure of the parable does not exist, and nothing can result from it but confusion and error. So when man as a moral agent is compared to a tree, if the former be devoid of moral power, the latter should be destitute of vegetable power; or if a man's conduct towards God is illustrated by the conduct of a son towards his father, if the former have no power over his conduct towards God, the latter should have no power over his conduct towards his parent.

Let the reader recollect himself but a moment, and he will be convinced that none of the parables are formed upon this principle. *They uniformly introduce, for the illustration of our moral action, objects or agents in possession of the entire power belonging to their nature.* If an impenitent sinner be compared to a fig-tree, it is to a living and not a dead one. (Luke xviii. 6.) If the condition of man is shadowed forth by that of servants who received talents to employ for their Lord, they receive every man "according to his several ability." (Matt. xxv. 15.) If the address of the gospel is likened to the invitation to a feast, the parties to whom it is addressed have full power of accepting it. (Luke xiv. 16, *et seq.*) We might go in the same manner through the whole of the parables, and not find a single instance in which a different idea is insinuated.

This is a remarkable fact, and bears directly upon our argument. These parables, in which

man, in relation to his moral conduct, is compared to objects possessing the whole power which naturally pertains to them, clearly intimate that man is in possession of all the power requisite to moral action. If this is not the case, the parables are founded on a mistaken analogy, and must lead to erroneous conclusions.

If man were really destitute of power, he not only might, but *must* be compared to objects devoid of their proper strength, as to a dead tree, a dead man, the diseased, or the blind; but it is very remarkable, that, *while epithets of this kind are freely applied to man himself not a single object of this class is used for the purpose of parabolical illustration.* The reason is, that these expressions, when applied to mankind, become metaphors, and though highly significant and important, are used out of their strict and literal meaning. Parables, however, are not metaphors, nor a species of composition in which terms can be properly used in a metaphorical sense. When the state of a tree is used to illustrate the condition of a man, it may be described in any terms literally and strictly applicable, but in no other; and hence the fact, that such terms as *blind*, *dead*, &c. never enter into our Lord's parables, is a decisive proof that there are really no such things as blindness and death in the condition of mankind.

5. In this place we may introduce, also, the passage in which the apostle asserts the intrinsic and independent sufficiency of the divine word: "From

a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, *which are able to make thee wise unto salvation*, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) We scarcely need stay to prove that the apostle here assigns to the scriptures a sufficiency to make men wise to salvation *apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit*. No reference to the Spirit is contained in the passage or its connexion, nor is there any ground of necessity for introducing it. We observe more particularly, that the sufficiency of the scriptures to impart saving wisdom is not to be viewed in the abstract, but in connexion with the persons to whom they are given; they are *able to make* us *wise unto salvation*. Now this, it is manifest, implies something respecting our condition, as well as the excellency of the scripture itself. It is not able to make an idiot, or an infant, or a dead man, wise unto salvation. It can have this effect upon none but such as are capable of understanding, appreciating, and obeying it; whence it evidently follows, that we, whom it *is* able to make wise unto salvation, are able to understand it, to appreciate, and to obey.

6. Another class of passages concurring to prove the sentiment under review, may be found in those which *require and enforce consideration*, not merely as a duty, but as *the method of obedience to the divine will*. These which follow are such: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would *consider* their latter end!" (Deut. xxxii. 29.) "*Consider* how great things God hath done for you."

(1 Sam. xii. 24.) "Thus saith the Lord, *Consider* your ways." (Hag. i. 5, 7.) Of the same tenor are the texts in which the Lord requires men to *hearken*, a word expressive simply of attention, or consideration: "Take heed and *hearken*, O Israel." (Deut. xxvii. 9.) "*Hearken* to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. *Hearken diligently* unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight in fatness. *Incline your ear* and come unto me; *hear*, and your soul shall live." (Isa. xlvi. 12. lv. 2, 3.) In some instances the word *hearken* is used to denote the very obedience to which it leads. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken*, than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.) "Who will *hearken and hear* for the time to come?" (Isa. lxii. 23.) To these may be added the passages in which God rests the burden of his complaint for disobedience on the want of consideration: "But they refused to *hearken*, and stopped their ears." (Zech. vii. 7.) "Israel doth not know, my people doth *not consider*." (Isa. i. 3.) "They *consider not* in their hearts." Hosea vii. 2. "But they said, We will *not hearken*. Behold ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that ye may *not hearken* unto me." (Jer. vi. 17. xvi. 12.)

Every attentive reader of the scriptures knows that similar language might be quoted to a great extent. Let us ask, what is the import of it? Can it imply less than we have stated above, namely, that in God's own view, consideration is the method by which obedience is to be induced, and an

exercise from which it would certainly follow? To engage us to obedience he requires consideration, and nothing else; if obedience be not rendered, he ascribes it to the want of consideration, and to nothing else. Is he right in doing so? Is it conceivable that he would have done so, if it ought to be referred to any other cause? Are we going beyond the clear testimony of the divine word when we say, that the question of obedience or disobedience is exclusively a question of consideration or inconsideration? But if this be the case, then it cannot be maintained that we have not *power to obey*, unless it can be said also that we have not *power to consider*, which obviously cannot be said of any man who retains his intelligent faculties. So long as we have power to consider, according to God's own word, we have power to obey.

We may be allowed here to pause a moment, for the sake of pointing out to such of our readers as have made themselves acquainted with the principles of moral science, as laid down in our first chapter, their perfect accordance with the language of sacred writ. We have stated that our entire power of self-regulation lies in the faculty of attention, or consideration; and that this faculty gives an effective power of self-control, so far as motives are sufficient for the purpose. The scriptures address us precisely in the manner which we should anticipate upon this supposition. They call upon us to obey commands, and to consider, that we may obey; if we do not obey, they tell us that it is because we

have not considered; both these addresses proceeding plainly upon the principle, that, if we had considered, we should have obeyed. The scriptures, it is true, were not intended to teach us moral philosophy; but there is nevertheless a system of moral philosophy on which the scriptures proceed, and when we find one with which they manifestly harmonize, we may satisfactorily assure ourselves of its truth.

CHAP. XI.

The argument from express words of scripture continued.

II. Besides the passages which refer directly to the power possessed by man, those bear as decisively upon the argument, which *indicate the nature of the cause preventing the performance of right action.*

Two things being necessary to the performance of any action, namely power to perform it and a disposition to perform it, one of two causes likewise, or either of them, may operate to its prevention: namely a want of disposition, or a want of power. *Do the scriptures say any thing respecting the cause which hinders men from repenting? and if they do, to which of those above-mentioned do they ascribe this*

impediment? The information they contain on this subject may be expected to be full and satisfactory.

1. It will now probably occur immediately to every reader, how often we are expressly taught that men *cannot* repent. Such is the language of our Lord: "No man *can* come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. Without me ye *can* do nothing. With men this is *impossible*." John vi. 44; xv. 5; Matt. xix. 26. Similar expressions are of frequent occurrence in the sacred writings. This phraseology has been conceived to prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that men have *no power* to turn to God. *Is it not*, it is demanded, *expressly asserted? and can a doctrine so clearly stated ever be impugned, without calling in question the authority of holy writ?*

Far be it from us to incur this heavy criminality or to betake ourselves to such a refuge! It must be a bad system which shrinks from any portion of God's word; and the writer hopes he should feel no satisfaction in any sentiment he holds, if there were a single expression in the oracles of God to which he could not attach a fair, full, and consistent meaning. In this case he has simply to observe, that he conceives *the import of the terms in question to have been mistaken.*

In order to show this, we may begin by observing that the word *cannot* is by no means uniformly used to denote the want of *power*, but is very commonly employed to express *determination*. We do this with great frequency in our ordinary conversation:

as when we say, I cannot come, or, I cannot agree to it; in which cases all that we mean to convey is our determination not to do these things. Now, if it be a fact that the term *cannot* is *not uniformly used to denote power, but sometimes determination*, then the argument drawn from its use is clearly inconclusive; and it requires to be ascertained *in what cases it refers to the one, and in what cases to the other.*

This inquiry it will be much better to conduct on general principles, than with reference to particular passages of scripture. Let us first ascertain the rule by which the import of the term is regulated, and then impartially apply it to whatever cases may arise. This rule we conceive to be as follows:— *The term* cannot *denotes determination, and not power, when and whenever it is applied to acts, whether internal or external, the performance of which depends upon the state of the mind.*

It is scarcely needful to observe, that many of our actions do depend upon the state of the mind, and upon nothing else. Whether, in a state of health and freedom, I rise or sit, I walk or remain in the house, I read or write, and innumerable things besides, depend solely on the state of my mind; that is to say, according to the state of my mind I may, and shall, either do them or let them alone. Now if, in any of these cases I were to use the word *cannot*, as in saying, I cannot walk now, or I cannot come yet, the word *cannot* in this case would simply express my determination that I would not.

The reason why it must be understood in this sense is, that I am plainly in full possession of power to do the very things I have said I cannot do; nothing but my determination not to do them prevents me; and therefore the word *cannot*, in this case, must be taken to denote *determination* and *not power*.

To show how purely this term is applied to the purpose of expressing determination merely, without the slightest association with the idea of power, we may give the following example. Conceive a plan to be submitted to you for your consideration and concurrence. It appears to you unadvisable, and you say, I am not *willing* to embark in such a business. Suppose it is pressed upon you more strongly; you still disapprove it, and reply, Do not urge it, for I never *can* agree to it.—Why have you made this change of expression? Had any fit of *inability* come over you just at that moment, that you said, *I cannot*? Or did you not mean to express precisely the same thing by *cannot* in your second answer, as by *not being willing* in your first, only more decidedly? Imagine further, that, upon fuller information, your objections vanish, and you ultimately agree to the plan proposed. Is this because you have acquired any *new power*, which you had not five minutes before? Or is it not rather that your determination merely has undergone a change? It is evident, therefore, that the phrases *cannot* and *will not* are used interchangeably, the former conveying *precisely*, though more emphatically, the meaning of the latter.

It may be said, that, although in some instances where an action depends on the state of the mind, the word *cannot* may denote only determination and not power, it does not follow that this should *always* be the case; *sometimes* perhaps it may indicate a want of power also. The proof of such a use of the word lies upon the party who adduces the possibility of it. We believe that such a case does not exist, but that, upon the most extensive and accurate examination, it will be found that, *whenever* the word *cannot* is applied to acts which depend upon the state of the mind, it denotes *determination only*, without any reference to power. Nor can it very well be otherwise. For, in the first place, it would be a very confounding method of speech to make one and the same word convey two dissimilar, and in some respects opposite ideas *at once*. It is a considerable freedom with language, to employ a word for such purposes at *different* times and in *different* circumstances; but to go further than this is a kind of legerdemain, which could not be accomplished without some little difficulty. In the next place, it is not in the nature of things that, when an act depends upon the state of the mind, power should be wanting; for if power is wanting, then the act does *not* depend on the state of the mind. It is very possible that both power and disposition to perform a given action may be wanting at the same time; as, for example, that a man may have neither money nor inclination to pay his debts; but in this case it is clear that the non-performance of the action does

not depend upon the state of his mind, because, if the state of his mind were different, still he could not pay his debts, not having money for the purpose. If it were said of such a man, he *cannot* pay his debts, nobody would understand this of his *will*, but of his *power*. The reason of this is, that the strict and primary reference of the word *cannot* is to *power* its reference to *will* being secondary and analogical: whence it follows that *whenever the idea of power is present, the word* cannot *must apply to it, and not to will; it can apply to will, therefore, only when the idea of power is absent, and obviously must do so whenever this is the case.* Whenever, therefore, an act depends upon the state of the mind, if the word *cannot* be used in reference to it, it refers to determination only, and not to power.

Our object in these remarks is not to frame any artificial rule to which the use of language may be forcibly reduced, but to ascertain upon what principles its employment is actually regulated among mankind. If the universal practice in reference to the word *cannot* be as above stated, the rule so deduced is capable of the most strict and just application to the declarations of holy writ. The language in which God has spoken to us is the language of man; it was in all respects suitable, desirable, and necessary that it should be so, if it was intended for the instruction of mankind; nor can any good reason be assigned why the import of it should not be determined by the same methods as that of ordinary life. Upon this principle, then, we ask, what our

divine Lord means when he says, "No man *can* come unto me." The meaning of it *may* be, no man has *power* to come; but since the word *cannot* has not *always* this meaning, it is proper to inquire into the particulars of the case. *Upon what does a sinner's coming to Christ depend? If it depends upon the state of his mind, the word* cannot *in this case does not denote power, but determination only.* Let the scriptures be consulted on this head.

It is remarkable that when our friends from whom we differ refer to sacred writ for informotion respecting the obstacle to repentance, their quotations are invariably of one kind. They adduce immediately various declarations that men *cannot* come to Christ; and, if you were to listen to them only, you would never imagine that there were passages which exhibited the subject in any other light. Yet there are such passages, and many of them. A sample of them follows: "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye *would* not. He said, *I will not.* Because I called, and ye *refused*, I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. Seeing ye *put away from you* the word of God, we turn unto the Gentiles." (John v. 40.) (Matt. xxxi. 37. xxi. 29.) (Prov. i. 21.) (Acts xiii. 46.) Such quotations might be greatly multiplied. And in considering the import of the divine oracles respecting the hinderance to repentance, why should they be overlooked? Have they no meaning? On

the contrary, we conceive their meaning to be clear and indubitable; namely, that sinners do not repent *because they will not.* Their conduct in this respect *depends upon the state of their minds;* there being nothing but malignity of heart, and enmity to God, to prevent their coming to him through his Son. But if this be the case, then, according to the rule laid down, the word *cannot, does not refer to power, but to determination only.*

If this conclusion is to be set aside, it must be by showing that repentance does *not* depend upon the state of a sinner's mind, that there is some other obstacle to it besides the wickedness of his heart, and such an obstacle as would still operate if the wickedness of his heart were destroyed. It would afford us great pleasure to see this fairly undertaken, and we should look with much interest for the result. For ourselves we will only say that, if there were any such impediment, the burden of men's impenitence could not be justly laid upon their unwillingness, where, nevertheless, our divine Lord has laid it, and where doubtless it truly rests.

In reference to the discussion in which we are engaged, the terms *will not,* &c. have a more decisive bearing than the term *cannot,* to which greater prominence has been given. The last is an analogical expression, and requires a limited construction; the former are literal expressions, and have only to be interpreted in their strict and obvious sense: the one tells us what the hinderance to repentance *is like,* the others tell us what *it is.* With

respect to the *nature* of the impediment, therefore, these are the only passages which give us any information at all, and, instead of being thrown into the back-ground, they are the only ones which should be consulted.

If it be finally admitted, and we conceive it cannot be disproved, that the only thing which obstructs the return of sinners to God through Christ is the malignity of their hearts, then it follows, as we have shown, that the word *cannot*, as applied to this case, is meant to express *no want of power*, but simply the fact of the sinner's *determination*. Should an objection be raised on the supposed ground of taking away the meaning of words, or of introducing confusion into the use of language, the reply is obvious. We wish to understand the words of holy writ precisely in the same manner as we do those of ordinary life, as it is quite natural, and even imperative that we should, unless reason can be shown for the contrary. Can any such reason be shown? Why do any persons insist upon our allowing a meaning to certain phrases *in* the bible, which neither we nor they would assign to them *out* of the bible? The proof of such a necessity lies with them, and must be adduced before we can comply with their demand. So far from taking away the meaning of words, we give them the precise and full import currently attached to them: why do those who differ from us impose on them a different one? And as to introducing confusion into the use of language, this is the very thing of

which they are pre-eminently guilty, while the method we adopt is the only way of avoiding it. No confusion arises in ordinary intercourse from the word *cannot* being frequently used to express determination only; and for this reason, that the cases in which actions depend upon the state of mind are for the most part very manifest, and that in *all* such cases the word is known to refer to the determination alone. If the language of scripture is treated on the same principle, there will be no confusion in the use of it; but if it comes to be insisted on that the word *cannot*, *must in all cases denote some want of power*, or that it *may do so in some instances where nevertheless the act depends upon the state of the mind*, this will introduce confusion enough, and it would as grievously confound the intercourse of men, as it does the oracles of God.

Should it be asked why, if men have power to repent, it is so repeatedly and strongly asserted that they *cannot*, it is only needful to ask in reply, why, in common life, we so frequently say we *cannot* do a thing which we really *can* do. The reason in both cases is one and the same. It is that this form of expression conveys the idea of fixed and unalterable determination more emphatically, and at the same time less offensively, than any other. So when in reply to your importunate request, a friend says, I *cannot* do it, it is equivalent to his telling you that it is of no use to press him further, and it intimates at the same time that his refusal arises from no unwillingness to oblige you, but from the imperative in-

fluence of other considerations. Just such is the use of these terms in sacred writ. They express the fixed determination of a sinner with great emphasis, and afford, perhaps, the only method by which the painful but important truth of its *certain* prevalence can be convincingly conveyed.

We may now perhaps dismiss, without more particular consideration, the whole of the passages of scripture, the force of which lies in the use of the term *cannot*. To decide the import of one, is to decide that of them all. With them, also, may be classed the kindred term *impossible*, which occurs (Matt. xix: 26;) but which is used, and must be interpreted, upon the same principle as the almost identical word *cannot*, already considered.

A phrase somewhat different occurs in Rom. v. 6. "For when we were yet *without strength*, Christ died for the ungodly." We conceive this passage to be inapplicable to the question before us; inasmuch as it seems to refer, not to the case of a sinner's coming to God through Christ, but to the practicability of opening a way for the approach of a sinner at all. Most certainly we are without strength to make an atonement for sin, or to satisfy any of the demands of God's righteous law in respect of the justification of a sinner; and this consideration gives great force to the statement of the apostle, that in this helpless condition, Christ died for us. But this has no connexion with the present argument. The question we are now to answer pre-supposes that Christ has died, and that the way

to God through him is open; and we ask, *has a sinner power to come to God through Christ:* a question very different from that which relates to his *power to atone for sin*, and to be answered on very different principles.

The same remark is applicable to another passage, which has been quoted in this connexion, from Rom. viii. 8. "So then, they that are in the flesh *cannot please God.*" The apostle in this place is not referring to the actions of ungodly men, but to their estimation in the sight of God; and the sentiment would be more accurately expressed by saying, Those who are in the flesh cannot be acceptable to God, or approved by him, Θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύνανται. In this view the text has manifestly no bearing on the subject before us.

2. Besides the passages which contain the terms *cannot* and *impossible*, which have been erroneously conceived to be express declarations of human inability, there are others which are regarded as furnishing powerful auxiliary evidence on the same side. Such are the following: "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?* Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Who are *dead in trespasses and sins. Can these dry bones live?*" (Jer. xiii. 23. Ephes. ii. 1. Ezek. xxxvii. 3.)

We class these passages together at present, for the sake of making respecting them one general observation. *They are all of them plainly metaphorical.* They are not literal descriptions, but figures

of speech. It may perhaps be said that this is no uncommon way of evading a difficulty, and may be used for ill purposes as well as good. We are quite aware of this. But still it must be allowed that there are figurative expressions in the divine oracles; and while we fully admit, on one hand, that they have a definite and important meaning, which must not be frittered away, we must contend on the other, against any unwarrantable stretch of their signification. To avoid difficulties on both sides, let us set down in a few words the rules by which the character and the import of any figurative expression may be ascertained.

We agree, then, that *every passage, and every phrase, is to be taken literally, unless there is something in its position or use which determines it to be figurative;* but *every expression must be taken to be figurative which in its literal sense is inapplicable to the subject to which it is applied.* When, for example, our Lord says, John xv. 1. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," inasmuch as the terms *vine* and *husbandman* are not literally applicable to the Divine Father and Son, we say they are figuratively used. Now there is no difficulty whatever in the use of this rule. The nature of the things ordinarily spoken of is sufficiently obvious to inform us, with very little trouble, whether the words applied to them are literally applicable or not. If they are, we allow of no metaphor; if they are not, we cannot deny it.

Let us inquire further, *what effect is produced on*

the meaning and interpretation of a word, when it is figuratively employed.

When a word is figuratively employed, *it is taken from a subject to which it properly or strictly refers, and applied to one to which it does not properly refer.* So when David says, "The Lord is my light:" he takes the word *light*, which properly refers to the effect of some luminous body on the eye, and applies it to the influence of divine mercy on his mind. Now, when a word is so taken from one subject and applied to another, it is obviously impossible that, in its secondary use, it can convey *all* the ideas which it did in its primary one, the two objects being far from having altogether the same properties. The effect of using a word figuratively, therefore, is *to limit its signification, and to select some of the ideas it has conveyed in its proper employment, for application in its new and* (rhetorically speaking) *improper one.* Thus, in saying, "The Lord is my light," the psalmist drops all the ideas belonging to light as a material body, &c. &c., and retains only those relating to its directing and cheering influence. This rule, also, we shall find uniformly and easily applicable. We have only to notice the features in which the objects compared either agree or disagree: *in those in which they agree, the ordinary import of the term which is now metaphorically used will apply; in those in which they do not agree, its application is not to be attempted.*

With these simple rules in our hand, let us re-

sume the consideration of the passages which await our attention.

(1.) Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well." The Ethiopian changing his skin, and the leopard his spots, is here put in comparison with a man ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well; that is, a change in the state of the body is compared with a change in the state of the mind,—a change in something in its own nature unalterable by man, with a change in something which *is* susceptible of alteration, as the state of the mind undeniably is, by human means. It is evident that there is no similarity in the two cases in respect of *capability of change;* and on this point therefore nothing can be learnt from the comparison. The aspect in which the cases are similar is the *actual non-production of the result, and the certainty that it will not be produced.* Let means to any extent be employed for the changing of the Ethiopian's skin or the leopard's spots, the end will never be attained; and with equal certainty, notwithstanding the use of every means, will those who have been accustomed to do evil, never learn to do well. This we conceive to be the fair and full force of the metaphor here employed, and we most freely adopt it. Our readers will perceive, however, that, like the terms already noticed, it does nothing more than express emphatically the fixedness of a sinner's *determination*—it indicates nothing respecting his *power*, only that

by this very circumstance, the existence of it is implied.

(2.) Eph. ii. 1.; v. 14. "You hath he quickened, who were *dead in trespasses and sins*. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise *from the dead*." This is undoubtedly very forcible language, nor have we any inclination to weaken it. We apprehend, however, that it is to be considered as figurative and not literal. The word *death* properly refers to organic or physical life; but here it is applied to a *state of the mind*, which, though it may be in some respects analogous to natural life, is manifestly not identical with it, and to which, therefore, a term derived from so different a subject cannot be in every respect applicable. The import of the term *death*, therefore, must be limited in this case; and not all the ideas ordinarily conveyed by it can be transferred to the new object, but only such as the existing analogy may permit. The things put into comparison with each other are the body under the influence of death, and man, as a moral agent, under the influence of a sinful disposition. Now, death produces two principal effects: first the non-performance of vital action, as seeing, hearing, feeling, &c.; and, secondly, the destruction of the organization from which these actions proceeded, or the non-existence of power to perform them. In like manner, a sinful disposition induces the entire non-performance of right action in one who is under its reigning influence; but the influence of a sinful disposition does *not* destroy the structure from which

right action may proceed, that being, as we have shewn, no other than the possession of intelligent faculties, with which God has made us, and which remains as entire in the wicked as in the just. We know, in fact, that whatever the influence of trespasses and sins on a man's mind may be, they do not destroy its powers of action; for in that case they would be no less incapable of evil than of good. The point in which an analogy does obtain between the state of a dead body and that of a mind under the influence of sin, is this; that as the destruction of animal life prevents the exercise of animal functions in fact, so right exercises of the mind are in fact prevented by the influence of sin, and with as much certainty though not in a similar cause. *All that this passage teaches us, therefore, is the fixedness of a sinner's determination*, or the entire certainty that men of themselves will not turn to God.

Should any of our readers be dissatisfied with the view now given, it will be material for them to shew, if it can be shewn, that the term *dead* has in this case a literal, and not a figurative meaning. If they can do this, they will gain a great advantage to their cause. There are, however, some few difficulties in the way of it. We may observe, for example, that, literally speaking, the soul of man *is not dead*, but alive, as is manifest from its continual action, though that action be wrong; to which it might be added that the soul is never to die, because it is immortal. The apostle, moreover, is not telling us in what state man is generally, but in what state

he is *so far as he is influenced by sin*,—"dead in [or by] trespasses and sins;" and we know that the influence of sin is to make a man act wrong, and not by any means to render him incapable of acting at all. Other expressions, also, are used on the same subject, which are quite incompatible with a literal interpretation of this. As, for instance, in one of the passages under consideration, "Awake, thou that *sleepest*, and arise from the *dead*." How can a man be at *the same time both dead and asleep?* Or if he be *literally dead*, what is it short of absurdity to call him *blind*, or *dull of hearing;* or to ascribe to him either evil or good in any form? These and a few other difficulties must be surmounted, in order to establish a literal meaning of the passages before us; and until this is done, the view taken of it above, we believe, cannot be impeached.

(3.) To the same class of expressions belong those which represent men as blind or dull of hearing, or asleep; "The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not. Their ears are *dull of hearing*. Awake, thou that *sleepest*." (2 Cor. iv. 4;) (Acts xxviii. 27;) (Eph. v. 14.) No question will be raised, we suppose, as to the figurative character of this phraseology. Blindness, deafness, and sleep, are states of the body: to which, if any state of the mind be analogous at all, it can be only in part. So far as these terms express *an existing state of insensibility*, they may be applied, with their utmost force, to the state of a sinner's mind towards God; he does neither perceive, nor at-

tend to the things of salvation: but so far as they indicate an *incapacity* for such actions, the application of them to the state of a sinner's mind is forbidden by the known fact, that he is actually in the enjoyment of his rational and intelligent powers, which constitute his capacity for them all. These expressions, therefore, denote nothing more than *an existing state of inattention to divine things, with the certainty of its continuance.*

It may be observed, in passing, that, although it is manifestly unwarrantable to make a literal use of the texts we have been examining, it is on such an application of them that their whole force, as used with great frequency by divines of a certain class, depends. Exhorting sinners has been gravely compared to going into a burying ground, and calling to the dead; just as though men under the influence of sin were *literally dead*, or dead in the *whole sense* of that term. What brave words may be built upon the most glaring and ruinous fallacies!

It has often been imagined to be an insuperable difficulty in the way of maintaining human ability, that it involves apparently an express contradiction to the sacred scriptures, and much wonder seems to have been felt that the advocates of the sentiment have not been startled by so tremendous a necessity. Such an appearance, however, results necessarily and in all cases from the use of analogical language. For example, the bible affirms that God is a sun and shield; yet who would hestitate to say that God is *not* either a sun or a shield? Of bread

Christ declared that it was his body; yet we maintain without scruple that the sacramental bread is *not* the body of Christ. Do we feel guilty in either of these cases of contradicting the word of God? Certainly not. Whenever words are used out of their strict reference, they are *true in one sense and false in another;* and necessarily so, because it pertains to such a use of words to retain only a part of their ordinary meaning. Thus it may be said of the declaration "No man can come unto me," that, if the word *can* be analogically used in it, as we have endeavoured to shew, it is true in one sense, and in another it is false. Take such part of the ordinary meaning of the word *cannot* as the analogy in the case justifies, and it is true; but take such part as is not justified by the existing analogy, and you make a new assertion, one which Christ never intended, and this assertion is false. Seeming contradictions are thus, when properly understood, harmonious truths. God *both is and is not* a sun and shield; bread *both is and is not* the body of Christ; man *both can and cannot* turn to God; conversion is *both possible and impossible* with men; sinners are at the same time *both dead and alive*. The one series of these assertions is true *figuratively*, and the other is true *literally*. When I say God is *not* a sun, it is no way contradictory of the text which declares that he *is* one, because that text is meant to intimate only that in some respects he is *like one*. And when I say men *can* come to Christ, it is equally remote from opposition to his affirmation that they

cannot, because the only intended meaning of those words is that they certainly will not, being in this respect *like men that cannot*. A very instructive and convincing example of this use of terms has already been before us, in the various forms in which the evangelists record the quotation of Isaiah vi. 9, 10, in the discourses of our Lord, which may here again be exhibited for attentive perusal. "*Hear ye* indeed, but understand not; *see ye* indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people gross and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; *lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears*, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.—They *seeing see not;* and *hearing they hear not*, neither do they understand. By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.—That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted.—That *seeing* they might *not see*, and hearing they might not understand."

If it be true, therefore, that the terms in question are figuratively or analogically employed, we are running no hazard by a mere apparent contradiction of them. It is no real contradiction; but, in fact, is

absolutely necessary in order to set these passages of scripture in their true light. It has been reprobated as, if not incorrect, at least unguarded, to affirm in an unqualified manner that men *can* come to Christ, because Christ expressly declares they *cannot*. Let us only suppose that the same principle had been acted upon in reference to those other words of his, which are entitled to at least equal reverence, "This *is* my body;" that no person should ever have dared to say bread *was not* his body, because he expressly affirmed that it *was:* what would have been the result? The doctrine of transubstantiation would not have been exploded to the present day. And a similar mischief is now resulting from the unwillingness to affirm that men *can* come to Christ; it allows and encourages men to suppose that they *literally and truly cannot;* it conceals the very important fact of the limited import of the term in this connexion; and so renders our over-scrupulous regard to the letter of God's word subversive of its real meaning, and conducive to the propagation of pernicious and destructive error.

3. Having disposed of the passages which have been conceived to indicate a want of power, as the operating cause in a sinner's impenitence, and endeavoured to shew that they express nothing more than the fixedness of a sinner's determination, we may proceed to notice some by which the latter idea is directly conveyed.

(1.) We may be permitted briefly to refer again to the texts already quoted, which affirm that sin-

ners *will not* come to God through Christ. "Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.* Ye *would* none of my reproof." (John v. 49; Matt. xxiii. 27; Prov. i. 25.) Here is no metaphor. The words are used in their literal sense, and must be taken strictly to mean that men's determination not to come to Christ is *the reason* why they do not come. But if so, then it cannot be true that they are *unable;* for in that case their inability would be the reason, or at least a part of the reason, why they did not come.

(2.) Another class of expressions may here be noticed. "Because I have called and *ye refused,* I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but *ye have set at naught* all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. For that they *hated* knowledge, and did *not choose* the fear of the Lord. Seeing *ye put away from you* the word of God." (Prov. i. 24, 25, 29; Acts xiii. 46.) It is clearly stated in these texts that men's impenitence is of the nature of *a refusal, a setting at nought,* or *a putting away* of the gospel message. Now, these are acts which arise from a state of the mind, and which, from their own nature, can arise from nothing else. That non-performance of a thing which arises from want of power is never called a *refusal,* nor can it be so without a flagrant absurdity. It seems evident, therefore, that the only cause operating to prevent men from coming to Christ is the state of their

minds, which, according to the definitions laid down in the outset, is totally distinct and widely different from a want of power.

(3.) Phraseology of similar import occurs in John iii. 19. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have *loved* darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." The truth here inculcated is, that because men continue in spiritual ignorance they *prefer* it to spiritual knowledge; they love darkness rather than light. But could it be said of a *blind* man that he did not see *because he would rather not see?* Surely, if a man's spiritual ignorance arises from preference, it cannot be held *at the same time* to arise from incapacity; because, if he were incapable, there could be no opportunity for preference to be exercised. The act of preference between two objects, necessarily implies a power of choice respecting both.

(4.) There is yet another very striking expression used by our Lord, in quoting the important passage from Isaiah already noticed, as recorded by Matt. ch. xiii. 15. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes have they closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart*, and I should heal them." See also Acts xxviii. 27. No question can be entertained of the accuracy of the meaning thus attributed to this passage by the great prophet of his church. Ignorance of divine things, or spiritual

blindness, is ascribed to *the closing of their eyes by sinners themselves;* inevitably implying that they *have eyes to close, that their eyes are capable of seeing, and that they will certainly see, unless wilfully closed.* From the latter part of the verse it seems plain, also, that the dulness of hearing and the grossness of heart were equally voluntary. Sinners close their ears as well as their eyes, and harden their own hearts by a determined inattention to divine truth, for no other reason than because an attention to it would interfere with some other things, in which they are resolved not to be disturbed.

(5.) We may notice, also, the language of the apostle, (1 Cor. ii. 14.) "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, *because they are spiritually discerned?*" The important question respecting this passage is, what are we to understand by an object being *spiritually discerned?* Simply, I conceive, that *the discernment of it is favored or prevented by the state of the mind.* We know that there are many things, or, to speak more strictly, many properties of things, which we discern more or less clearly, or not at all, according to the state of the mind. A miser does not see the happiness of liberality, nor a voluptuary the pleasures of beneficence. The things of God are pre-eminently of this kind. The glory of God, the excellence of his law, the sinfulness of sin, the awfulness of eternity, and all things else pertaining to salvation, have the property of being *discerned or overlooked according to the*

state of the observer's mind. "They are spiritually discerned;" and because they are so, as long as the state of his mind is that of a natural man, namely, enmity to God, he cannot, that is, in point of fact he will not, discern them. But, inasmuch as the state of his mind is the only impediment to such discernment, the absence of it is by this passage distinctly referred to a *want of disposition*, and *not to a want of power.*

(6.) There is another passage deserving of notice, in which our Lord plainly states the cause which induces him to say that men *cannot* come to him to be of a strictly voluntary kind. (John v. 44.) "How *can* ye believe, *who receive honour one of another?*" There is no compulsion upon sinners, we suppose, to attach an undue importance to the honour which cometh from men. It is nothing more than the state of their minds which induces them to do so; yet it was *as influenced by this disposition alone* that our Lord declared they *could not* believe. The inference seems to be irresistible, that nothing but the state of their minds prevented their believing.

(7.) To these references may be added, Luke viii. 15; where, in the parable of the sower, the fruitfulness of the word is ascribed to its being "received into *an honest and good heart.*" All that is necessary to the efficacy of divine truth, therefore, is *a right state of mind;* and if so, there is no want of additional *power.*

The fact which we conceive to be established by the passages which have now gone under review is

this: that *the scriptures uniformly represent a sinner's impenitence as resulting, not from a want of power, but from a want of disposition alone.* We conclude, therefore, that *disposition is wanting*, and *power is not.* Had it been so, we could scarcely have searched the bible so far, without finding some, we might rather say many and unequivocal, indications of the fact.

CHAP. XII.

The argument from express words of scripture concluded.

III. ANOTHER class of scriptures illustrative of the point under consideration, may be found in those *which describe the nature of the change wrought in the conversion of a sinner.* The work effected in this case must of course correspond with the previous impediment to conversion. Now, the scriptures speak frequently and expressly of this work, and uniformly represent it to lie, not in any alteration of the *means* or *power* of repentance, but of *the state of heart*, or disposition. The following passages may serve as a specimen.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A *new heart* will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you; and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and

will give you a *heart of flesh*." A *new heart* here evidently means a new *state of heart*, or disposition, as appears from the following phrase, *a new spirit:* and the beautiful metaphor which closes the verse, conveys the same sentiment under a different form. Here is no reference to *power*.

Psalm cx. 2. "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." By the *day of power* in this passage, of course, we understand the period when the blessed Spirit operates savingly on the heart; and when he does so, the making of a sinner *willing* is declared to be the nature of his work. Could this have been said if it were the Spirit's work to give *power?*

John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, *draw* him." The use of the word *draw* in this passage is worthy of observation. *Drawing* is a process not any way adapted to the need of a man who has *no power;* it pertains rather to one who wants inclination. The work of the Spirit denoted by this word must be the gracious influence exercised upon the heart of a sinner, sweetly overcoming his hitherto cherished resistance, and making him *willing* in the day of power.

Acts xvi. 14. "The Lord *opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.*" The work of the Spirit as here described, consisted not in communicating *power*, but in opening the heart to attend to the truth, or in inducing *a disposition* to attend to it; *which Lydia*

must have had power to do before, or else she could not have done it merely in consequence of a change of her disposition.

If the change produced in the conversion of a sinner were giving him *power* to repent, such language as this would surely be adapted to mislead. Not a single passage that we are aware of can be adduced to shew that the Spirit of God confers on a sinner any additional means, or power of repentance. Yet, if power were wanting, he infallibly must do so ; and if he really did this, so important a part of his work would certainly not have been overlooked.

It will probably occur to the reader that the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion is compared to a *new birth*, and even to a *new creation.* (John iii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 17.) This language has been conceived to indicate *the production of new powers*, as well as of *new action.* As it is manifest, however, that these are but *comparisons*, so, according to what has already been stated, it is important to observe *the true extent of the analogy subsisting between the objects compared.* Birth and creation, it will be admitted, do involve the production of new powers. But, when these terms are applied to the *conversion of a sinner*, we are immediately met by the fact that the *powers of moral action in man are already in existence*, namely, his intelligent faculties. *Here is no room, therefore, for the production of new powers ;* and hence, of necessity, the analogy, and the force of the metaphor, *are confined to the pro-*

duction of new action. Now, *the production of new action* in the mind is identical with a *change of disposition*, disposition being the source of habitual and permanent action. To which it may be added, that the change in character and conduct subsequent upon a change of disposition, or of the habitually prevalent state of the heart, in the case of a sinner towards God, is of quite sufficient magnitude and extent to justify the application of the phrases under examination. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

In a few instances the same analogical use of terms may be observed, which prevails so largely in reference to the impenitence of man. So the apostle says, "I thank God, who hath *enabled* me."—But it is manifest that the word *enabled* refers to an operation on the state of his mind, and indicates only the production of a particular disposition. At the same time it is remarkable that this kind of phraseology is much less frequently employed respecting the divine interposition for the production of good, than the sinner's determination in the working of evil. Of those who do not turn to God, it is much more frequently said they *cannot* do it, than it is of those who do turn to him that they are *enabled* to do it; they are *made willing*. Sometimes a marked diversity of expression occurs in the same passage; as where our Lord says, "No man *can* come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him;" in which case it was ob-

viously most natural to have said, "except the Father *enable* him." This difference shews that there was a peculiar end to be answered by the use of the term *cannot*. We conceive, that it was designed to express more emphatically the fixedness of man's determination against God; while the language applied to the work of the Spirit, has been framed to exhibit more particularly the voluntary nature of conversion, without concealing the knowledge and manifest power of the influence by which it is wrought.

Among the passages adduced in this controversy by those who differ from us, we have observed many which simply *state the fact* that salvation *is* of the Lord; that his people *are* made willing in the day of his power; that all Zion's children *are* taught of the Lord; and *are* born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God.—(Psalm iii. 8. cx. 3. Isa. liv. 13. John i. 13.)

Undoubtedly these are highly important and decisive passages *as to the fact that the conversion of a sinner is in every case produced by divine influence;* a fact to the cordial admission of which, the present volume bears ample and unequivocal testimony. But how does the assertion of this fact bear upon the question at issue? Here are two causes supposed, namely, the inability and enmity of man, either of which will operate to render the Spirit's influence necessary to the conversion of a sinner; whichever of them may be conceived to be in operation, therefore the necessity of that influence is consistently

maintained, and consequently the fact, that conversion never takes place but by virtue of its exercise. Texts of scripture which merely assert this, assert an important truth, but they assert nothing which affects the point under discussion. This ground is occupied in common by both parties in the dispute, and is quite remote from the field in which the contest is to be decided. The introduction of these passages may excite the more observation, because they have often been brought forward with great ostentation, and exhibited with much parade of scripture proof, as though they alone were altogether decisive of the controversy; while, in fact, it indicates nothing more than an entire misunderstanding of the subject, unless it should discover too, what we are very unwilling to suspect, a wish to depreciate an argument by raising an unfounded prejudice against those who advance it.

The import and bearing of holy scripture in other aspects has been, or yet will be noticed, in other parts of this volume. It has been our object here to observe the passages which bear upon our subject *directly*, and to shew that they are in unison with the general argument; which we trust has been satisfactorily done. It will occasion the writer the deepest affliction, if, however unconsciously, he has been led in these remarks to alter or to diminish the full and true import of the divine word; and unutterably would he be ashamed of himself, if he could harbor a wish to evade, in however unwelcome a direction, the force of truth: but as, on the

one hand, he hopes he has no aim but to know the mind of Christ; so, on the other, he solemnly believes what he has stated to be the correct expression of that mind, so far as the passages examined are concerned. He has not, perhaps, adduced every text on which stress has been laid in this discussion; but those which have been brought forward he hopes are fair specimens of the classes to which they belong, and sufficient to establish and illustrate the principles on which the whole are to be interpreted. Nothing is more true or more important than the sentiment, that the express and direct sense of scripture, wherever it can be ascertained, must determine every matter of religious opinion; but the case before us is one in which this very maxim has been made the foundation and the bulwark of an extensive and long prevalent error. The declaration that men *cannot* come to Christ having been once supposed to mean that they have *no power* to do so, the force with which this is asserted seems to have attached to the mistake a most unmerited character of sacredness and inviolability. Whatever might be disputed, this must not be called in question, because it was expressly asserted; and he who would dare to suggest a doubt of it could not but incur the heaviest accusations of heterodoxy and heresy. Slender basis for so vast a superstructure! Upon what films can wide-spreading errors be established! The whole is but an oversight; a mere inadvertency, in misinterpreting analogical phraseology as though it were literal, and thus throwing

out of view other portions of the divine word, a fearless examination of which would instantly have dispelled the delusion. The writer yields to no man in his willingness to submit to the direct sense of scripture, it is because he is convinced that it is a mistake; and he calls upon his brethren opposed to him in argument to abide by their own principle, and to vindicate their claim to a supreme veneration for God's word. Which do they love best; their system, which they have long imagined the word of God to support; or the word of God, which they may now perceive leaves their system to fall? The writer hopes and believes the latter: but the result will declare it.

CHAP. XIII.

Whether the sentiment which ascribes power to man does not pre-eminently humble the sinner, and glorify God:—The argument from the tendency of the doctrine.

If we were to say that the apparent tendency of a sentiment should in *all* cases be held decisive of its real character and truth, we should doubtless be going too far. With our limited and imperfect knowledge, we may not always be competent judges

on such a point; we may ourselves be misled by error, or blinded by our feelings. Yet there are grounds on which an inquiry into the tendency of an opinion is both reasonable and important. Every thing which is just in sentiment must also be right in tendency; rectitude in sentiment being nothing more than an accurate view of things as they really exist, and things as they really exist being adapted by divine wisdom to exert a right influence on the heart. If an opinion, therefore, according to its legitimate use, tends apparently to evil, this is a presumptive evidence of its fallacy; as, on the other hand, there is a presumption in favor of its truth, if it tends to good. Though this is not to be considered as a principal argument, it is an important auxiliary one, it is proper that every sentiment should be brought to this test, as a help towards ascertaining its character.

With respect to the accordance of religious opinions with the truth of the gospel in this point, we have considerable facility of judgment. The divine dispensation of mercy has very distinct and peculiar features. Its aspect is by no means vague or equivocal; in the midst of its boundless condescension and riches of grace, its tendency is manifestly to abase man, and exalt his Maker. To the former is allotted shame and confusion of face, deep criminality and ill-desert; to the latter is ascribed unbounded and self-moved love, rich, free, and sovereign, as the sole spring of all that is happy for man, or excellent in him. It is an easy and effectual mode,

therefore, of bringing a doctrine to the test, to ask what is its tendency. Does it abase the sinner? Does it glorify God? Does it breathe the acknowledged spirit of his dispensation of grace?

The writer cannot help picturing to himself the surprise which one class of his readers may feel, at his bringing the doctrine he has endeavored to maintain to the test now before us; or the joy which may be felt by others at the anticipation of its approaching discomfiture. There is scarcely a point in which our brethren who oppose the sentiment of man's ability imagine themselves so strong as in this. They conceive that it tends to exalt the creature; and take this to be so entirely beyond doubt, that on this ground its condemnation with them is already past. They may be assured, however, that they proceed too rapidly. With the semblance of an impregnable fortress, they have no real strength. There is not the least unwillingness to bring the doctrine we advocate to this test; on the contrary, we are very desirous of it; being fully convinced that the result will be eminently in its favor. If it do not tend to humble man and to glorify God, let it perish and be forgotten!

1. Let us then recall the sentiment itself, that our view of it may be accurate. We maintain that man, in his present condition, possesses power to be what he ought to be; understanding by *power*, the *means* of being so. In order to guard against the perplexity which may arise from the frequent analogical use of the word *power*, it may perhaps

be better to use the word *means,* as strictly of the same import. Our enquiry is, first, *whether the idea that man possesses the means of being what he ought to be, tends to exalt or to humble him as a sinner.*

Now it appears evident that the *ascription to man of more abundant means of being what he ought to be, must have a direct tendency to represent him as the more deeply guilty if he is not what he ought to be.*

Even upon the supposition of our brethren, (which, however, we do not admit,) that man may be guilty, *in some measure,* though he have no means of being otherwise than he is, it seems plain that if he have means of being so, his guilt must be *greater;* and *greatest* of all according to the opinion which ascribes to him the *amplest* means. To say that a man does not love God when he cannot, may be to say a *bad thing* of him; but to say that he does not love God when he can, is surely to say *something worse;* or which is the same thing, to *affirm that man has power to love God, is to represent him in a light which aggravates his guilt, and tends more deeply to abase him.*

Yet all we have maintained is that man has the means of being what he ought to be; an opinion which, instead of exalting a sinner, has so direct a tendency to humble him, that whoever desires to humble him most deeply should obviously maintain it with the greatest emphasis.

It can scarcely be less than wonderful that this consequence should ever have been overlooked; but it may perhaps be ascribed to the influence of one or other of the following fallacies.

1. It may be thought by some that *power is an excellency; and that to ascribe power to man is to ascribe goodness to him, which in his fallen state, cannot justly be done.*

The error committed here lies in not observing the distinction between man *as a creature*, and man *as a moral agent;* or between *natural* and *moral qualities.* Looking at any *creature*, *as such*, the possession of power, or the means of action, is an excellency, inasmuch as it confers an adaptation for some superior kind of action. So the power of performing moral actions is an excellency in man, enabling him to do what other creatures cannot.—But when we regard man as a *moral agent*, and ask wherein his excellency *as such* consists, it is *not in power*, but in *the right use of power; not in having means of action*, but in *well employing them.* Power is a natural excellence, but not a moral one; an excellence of structure, but not of character. It is excellence, but not goodness: and therefore *to ascribe power to man is not to ascribe to him any goodness at all.*

That this is the true idea of power, or means of action, may appear more fully than this, that *the employment of it is not necessarily good.* Power may be used for evil, and it is in many cases so used; so that it might in these cases be regarded as an evil itself. The fact is, however, that power has no moral character at all; it is neither evil nor good; but a mere instrument of action, by the varied employment of which good or evil character is formed and exhibited.

2. It may be alleged, perhaps, that *if power itself be not a moral excellency, power to do good must be so.*

But what then is power to do good? According to our definition of power, it is the means of doing good and nothing more. But *is the possession of the means of doing good a moral excellency?* A rich man has the means of being charitable; is this any goodness in him? If this question needs no answer, so neither does the following: A wicked man has the means of serving God; is this any goodness in him? The same principle decides both cases. The means of doing good constitute no moral excellency.

3. It may be said that *disposition is power, and disposition to do good is goodness.*

Most certainly, disposition to do good is goodness: but the reader will be kind enough to recollect that *we do not allow power and disposition to be the same.* If he is disposed to go over that ground again, we can only refer him to chap. ii. page 111.

4. It may be urged that *all power is declared to be of God; and that, therefore, if power be ascribed to man, it is derogatory to the glory of God.*

There is no doubt but all things are of God.—Every creature is endowed by his hand with whatever faculties it possesses, and is entirely dependent upon him for their continuance. In this sense, our power to act at all is of God; so likewise is our power to breathe, and our power to do evil as well as good. If, therefore, it is any way derogatory to God's honor to say that a man has power

to do good, it must be equally so to say that he has power to do evil, or to perform any of the functions of life. In fact, however, there is nothing dishonorable to God in either. Whatever powers God has given us, we possess; and to say what powers we possess is to say in other words what powers God has given us. To describe man *as he is* implies no question as to *his origin*, nor any insinuation of his *independence*.

When the power by which man works righteousness is said to be of God, it is necessary to recollect the double import of the term. An application of the principle by which the use of words is to be ascertained, will shew that the term power is here employed analogically, not in reference to the means of acting, but to the disposition to act. And if this be the case, all language of this kind is remote from the question: as we do not ascribe to man any disposition to act right, but simply the means of doing so. The fact, therefore, that God gives man the disposition to serve him by a special communication of grace, argues nothing respecting the means of serving him, which he still may, or may not, possess by nature.

To return from these digressions. In ascribing to man the means—that is, the power—of loving and serving God, we do nothing to exalt him, but every thing to abase him. Let the sentiment we maintain be compared in this respect with that which is opposed to it. *Affirm that man has no power to act right; does that abase him?* It *lowers*

him, indeed, by denying the principal attribute which raises him above the brutes, but it does not *dishonor* him; it sinks his *nature*, but it does not impugn his *character*. Upon this principle, in order to humble man more we should say that he has no power to think, none to reason, none to admire, none to be happy; let us only go on in the same direction, and we may ultimately reduce him to an oyster or a zoophyte. Profoundly humiliating indeed! *But all this while what charge of* GUILT *is fixed on him?* What blame is attached to him? Of what *criminality* does he stand convicted? *Absolutely none. Every diminution of his power*, on the contrary, *removes him from the possibility of being either evil or good*, and with the incapacity of an oyster, he attains also its innocence.

To deny power to man, therefore, is a preposterous method of attempting to abase him. But this is not all. *The species of power which our brethren refuse to ascribe to man is precisely that which is necessary to his being humbled, and without a consciousness of which he can never feel any abasement at all.* They affirm that man has no power, or means of doing good, or of avoiding evil; in which case, we maintain it to be impossible that a man should feel himself blameworthy, for either doing evil, or for not doing good. Whatever man may be accused of, a sincere and honest conviction that he had no means of doing otherwise always amounts to a full justification of himself in his own eyes, and must do so, while his rational constitution remains unim-

paired. Upon such a ground as this, therefore, no feeling of humiliation can ever arise.

The state of things which thus opens to us is truly admirable. Here are men who profess to hold doctrines abasing the creature, and cry down a sentiment because it exalts him; while the doctrine they espouse annihilates the possibility of blame, and furnishes the sinner with a complete justification; and that which they oppose, not only carries the guilt of the sinner to the highest pitch, but affords the only ground on which he can be convicted of criminality at all. Under what infatuation can it be, that, professing to maintain the deep criminality of transgression, they seize upon that on which the very existence of criminality depends, and strive to blot it out from the records of truth, and from the conscience of man? Allow that man has power to be and to do what he pleases, whether right or wrong, and you may hold him blameworthy; deny this, and let him be what he may, he is innocent. Yet this is the very thing which is singled out for denial. That is the doctrine, therefore, which exalts the creature; for it enables him to look with complacency on his heart and life, with all their iniquities; to justify himself, notwithstanding all the accusations of the law of God; and even to lift up his head with insult in the presence of his Maker and his Judge. Ours is the doctrine to abase man, and is the only doctrine which attaches to him a particle of real criminality. If he has power to serve God, then disobedience is a crime

—the sinner himself cannot but allow it to be so: and a crime fully proportionate to the glory of God, and the vastness of our obligations.

Let the influence of the two sentiments be embodied in two hypothetical cases. Let us imagine that we hear one person in a soliloquy of the following kind. "They tell me that I have sinned. They speak awfully of my breaking God's commandments, and of the punishment hereafter to be inflicted upon me. They say I ought to be deeply ashamed of myself; but *I could not help it. Sin is natural to me.* It is in my constitution, and *I have no power to be otherwise than I am.* If I am to be otherwise than I am, therefore, the Lord must make me so. It is unreasonable to blame *me; for I have done the very best* I *could, and certainly cannot blame myself.*"

We have carefully avoided in this case the use of all strong expressions, lest we should be supposed to have overcharged the picture. Let us now hear a soliloquy of a different kind. "I have heard that I ought to love God and to serve him; that I can do both; and that, with due consideration of his word, I shall certainly be led to do both. It is certain that I have never meditated seriously on the contents of the bible. I have bent my attention to the world; I have voluntarily avoided every thing adapted to render me serious; I have cherished an aversion to God and his ways; I have said to him, Depart from me. I have thus wilfully neglected the means of loving him. The heart which I could

have given to him, I have given to another. Affections which might have been engaged for him, have been willingly enlisted against him, till now I hate him and his ways. Wretch that I am! who shall express the depth of my wickedness? Is it thus I have treated God when he called me? Is it thus I have hardened my heart against those glorious truths, which, if I had but duly meditated on them, would have melted me into gratitude and love? How justly may he look on me with anger! How righteously will his indignation burn against me, even to the lowest hell! How bitterly must I reproach myself, as voluntary in my deepest guilt, and the author of my own ruin! O thou, my maker and judge! wherewithal shall I come before thee? By what arguments can my conduct be justified, or by what excuses can it be extenuated?"

The reader of course will judge, whether the natural tendency of the doctrines in question has been now fairly represented. He may easily satisfy himself that these are not fictitious cases. Let him observe the many persons around him who are not of a contrite spirit, and inquire why it is that a load of guilt like theirs occasions them no grief, and he will often have for answer, "*I cannot help it; you know I cannot do any better of myself.*" If, on the other hand, he should ever meet with one who holds this unwelcome sentiment of man's ability, he may be reckless about sin on other grounds, but he will always say, "Well, *I know I am to be blamed.*" Such is the influence of the two

sentiments *in fact;* and it may not be going too far to say, that, of all the errors working mischief in the heart of man the notion of his own inability is incomparably the most prolific source of self-complacency and religious unconcern.

II. Having seen how the doctrine of man's ability tends to abase the creature, let us now inquire, in the second place, *whether it tends to glorify the Creator.*

We may begin by remarking generally, that *God is glorified in exactly the same proportion as man is abased;* the quantity of shame and confusion of face belonging to the sinner being the precise measure of the grace exercised by the Saviour. If there were no sin there could be no grace; and by whatever degree sin is magnified, in the same proportion is grace glorified. Whatever sentiment, therefore, most humbles the sinner, most glorifies God: but we have already seen that the doctrine of man's ability most humbles the sinner; and we may conclude, therefore, that it will also most glorify God.

But to go into particulars. The glory of God in salvation, or that aspect of his glory pertaining to the present argument, consists in its being regarded as *an act of grace, free, sovereign, and infinite.* The true idea of *grace* seems to be that of *undeserved bounty, kindness to the unworthy;* and *the degree of grace* manifested obviously accords with the *degree of unworthiness in the objects of it.* To say that grace is free and sovereign, is to say that there is

nothing in the objects of it adapted to excite it; but that it springs solely from God's own bosom, and is regulated in its exercise by his own good pleasure.

The question respecting the glory of God in salvation, therefore, resolves itself into one respecting the unworthiness of man. *Is man undeserving of the kindness of God? Is he utterly undeserving of it; without any thing, of whatever nature, adapted to induce it? Is his character adapted rather to repel divine mercy, and to inflame just indignation? Is his criminality so great as to render it a matter of endless wonder that he should ever be forgiven?*

Let us first see *how these questions can be answered on the supposition that man has not power to be what he ought to be.* The case then is simply that of *a person who has fallen into some calamity without the means of avoiding it, and consequently without any fault on his part.* It may certainly be deemed kind to render assistance in such a case; and if this is what God has done, we would be very far from insinuating that it is not grace, since any regard to creatures must be in him a matter of infinite condescension. Nor will we here stop to inquire whether kindness of such a description confers any eminent lustre on the character of a benefactor; whether it could furnish just occasion of exalted encomium; whether it be more than accordant with the universal law of loving our neighbour as ourselves; or whether the omission of such a service would not attach a stigma difficult to be removed. Our object rather is to show, that, *whatever grace may have*

been manifested on the supposition of man's impotency, much more has been exercised on the supposition of his power.

If it be true that man has power, full and entire power, to be and to do all that he ought, to love God supremely, to delight in him and to serve him with all his heart, then the case is a very different one from that just exhibited. Whatever may be the wretchedness into which he may have fallen, and whatever its adaptation may be in itself to inspire compassion, the aspect of man's character towards God has a tendency to repress such a feeling. Why should his Maker rescue him? Has he not been his Maker's enemy? With ample powers for his service, has he not wilfully devoted them to the world, and trampled alike upon the commands and the mercies, the glory and the terrors, of the Almighty? What favours has he not abused! What dishonour has he not aimed to inflict! And all this when he had full power to do otherwise; when God had set before him the most moving truths, the consideration of which would have sweetly drawn him to love; but he would not incline his ear, neither would he hearken. Shall God save such a one? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a rebel as this? For such a wretch shall his arm be stretched out, and his Son be slain? This is a miracle of grace indeed. Love which prevails while crimes of the deepest dye provoke eternal wrath, and justice demands the execution of a righteous vengeance,—such love *is* free; it *may be* sovereign, and *must be*

glorious. Such love is worthy of the Eternal; and if all earth and heaven be called upon to shout its praise, the theme is infinitely higher than the song.

The writer cannot believe it needful to carry the illustration any further. He will leave it to appeal to every pious mind, only expressing his heartfelt delight that the sentiments he holds do lead him to most admiring views of the grace that bringeth salvation. Oh! if he felt that there were any sentiments which could sink him in deeper shame before the presence of his Maker, or inspire more elevated apprehensions of his Redeemer's love, were it for this luxury alone, he would instantly embrace them. It is for this reason, in truth, that he binds his present sentiments to his heart. None humble him like these; none like these inspire him with adoration of his Lord.

If a reader of the opposite persuasion should feel any force in the preceding argument, it may perhaps lead him to say—"But, after all, the great question is, Is the sentiment true; is it scriptural?" No doubt, this is the great question; and he will have the goodness to recollect how fully it has been treated in the former parts of this volume. It is not that we have examined our opinion in this indirect manner *in order to avoid the direct application of scriptural tests:* but having first applied them, we use this as a subsidiary means; and as the former justified us, so does the latter. It should be recollected, too, that we are now upon ground which our companions in argument have claimed as peculiar-

ly their own, and from which, as their impregnable bulwark, they have loudly proclaimed our defeat. We wish no triumph, neither let them practise any evasion; but let it be fairly decided which sentiment has the advantage on the ground now occupied. Nothing is easier than for a man, who is determined to maintain his opinion at all hazards, when baffled at one point, to run to another, and so lead an everlasting chase: but if there be any sincerity in the reference so often made to the tendency of the doctrine, we call upon our brethren either to show that it is not such as we have stated, or to abandon, if not their opinion, yet their boast; and to content themselves with being that portion of the christian church who hold *sentiments which justify man and annihilate the grace of God.*

CHAP. XIV.

Whether the sentiment of man's ability agrees with the actual exercises of his mind:—The Argument from Experience.

It can scarcely fail to have occurred to our readers, that the subject before us is by no means one, either of abstract speculation, or of remote inquiry. It relates to matters which lie within our own

breasts; to matters, therefore, respecting which our own consciousness should afford us the means of forming a ready and decisive judgment. One can scarcely withhold surprise, that on so home a topic there should have existed any diversity of opinion, or scope for argument; and if it does exist, it is highly natural and just to refer to every man's consciousness of what passes within him for a decision of the question. Whatever may be the value of philosophical disquisitions, whatever may be the force even of divine testimony, they are of no further influence nor truth, than as they accord with the facts existing in the bosoms of men. The use and end of them is not to produce a fictitious man, but to discover the real one; not to form a picture, but to exhibit a light. Respecting the whole question in the discussion of which we have been engaged, we say most cheerfully, Let experience decide it.

Much is it to be regretted that any circumstance should diminish the value of this appeal. Some readers, perhaps, under the influence of their own consciousness, may be ready to say that, on this ground, there cannot be two opinions, at least among those who are taught of God. The expectation is natural; but the fact does not justify it. There *are* two opinions, even among those who are taught of God; unless, at least, the parties in this discussion proceed to the extreme length of pronouncing each other not to be christians,—an anathema which, from angry and defeated disputants, is no way un-

common, but which we have no disposition to hurl at our brethren, and shall find it not difficult to bear, if it be only from *them*, and not from their Lord. But since those who have alike experienced divine teaching do not come to an instantaneous agreement upon this point, it is manifest that the appeal to experience cannot be made in the rapid and decisive manner which might have been anticipated. We shall need to advance with caution and discrimination. We shall, however, need no more than this. The ground for the appeal to experience is not at all affected by the different views which may be taken of it. No doubt can be entertained, but that the inward exercises of all true christians, though greatly diversified are substantially the same; and that they are spoken of in dissimilar terms, only because those terms are employed with more or less strictness and accuracy. We have seen already that a lax and unobservant use of words is the origin of many of the doctrinal perplexities involved in the present discussion; and we need not be at all surprised to find the same cause operating to disguise and distort the exercises of the heart. Let us only rectify these inadvertencies; let us but ask candidly what certain phrases mean, and reduce them fairly to their correct import, and then we shall hear distinctly what the testimony of experience really is.

Before we proceed to inquire of those to whom the Lord has been gracious, we wish to ask a few questions of the ungodly themselves. Of such

among them as would affirm that they *have* ability for their duty, we have no need here to speak; whether correct or not, their testimony is at all events on our side. We refer now to those who think they *cannot* do as they ought; language which is very often heard from some persons, especially when they have been induced to make any of those transient and abortive efforts with which the lives of many abound. Supposing my reader to be cherishing such a sentiment, we use the freedom of addressing him personally, and say;—What do you mean when you declare that you cannot love God or repent of sin, and serve him heartily? What hinders you? The question perhaps may startle and perplex you; you may be disposed to reply to it by saying again that you cannot, and that you cannot tell why; but we must repeat our inquiry. If you cannot repent, something hinders you, and something which may be discovered, if you will look closely, and speak honestly. What is it? Judge if we are not right in saying, that it is your wicked heart which will not let you repent. Your love of sin, of the world, and of self-indulgence, makes you deeply disrelish the consideration of religious truths; it drives you from them, and leads your thoughts to temporal things when they ought to be fixed on eternal ones. You know there is no other hinderance. You could love and serve God, if your own heart would let you; but if this be the case, then you have power to do it; for, if you had not, you could not do it though your own heart

would let you, and though it were even bent upon it most intently.

If you still say, But how can I help the state of my heart, which will not let me repent? we answer that you have the means of doing this, by the due consideration of religious truths. *Consider*, and you will be *wise*. Your experience will confirm this representation. For we ask, Have you ever given to religious truths the serious, honest, continued, and complete consideration, which you knew they deserved? If you have not, how can you say that such consideration would not have converted you? Again, have religious truths ever been seriously thought of by you, without producing *some* effect, and an effect exactly proportioned to the degree of consideration you may have given them? How else are we to account for the hours of anxiety, the bursts of sorrow, the occasional prayers and purposes of amendment, which your memory will readily recall? And if this be the case, as we are satisfied it is, it may fairly be reckoned a decisive proof that due consideration would have converted you, and that, by this instrument, you have the means of regulating your own heart. Further; How have religious truths at any time consciously failed to influence you, or lost the influence which they were beginning to exert upon you? You know very well that it has been by inconsideration. When they were brought before you, you took no pains to weigh them, but rather willingly forgot them, or perhaps indulged yourself in some

method of taking off their force; and when they had made you in some measure serious, or unhappy, the impression was lost by forgetfulness, if not by a method more flagrantly criminal. We are not afraid of your experience contradicting these statements: and if it do not, then we have its unequivical testimony to the sentiment, that every man possesses ability for his duty. You, at least, possess ability for yours.

In harmony with the principle we are maintaining are those well attested instances in which conversion has more manifestly been induced by reflection. We hear, for example, of a traveller at an inn engaging to reward a servant, if she will promise to spend in prayer a quarter of an hour every day till his return; and of a dying mother in India, who enjoined her son to spend half an hour every morning in solitary reflection. In both these cases conversion resulted; and there are doubtless many similar ones. These are direct testimonies to the adaptation and power of religious truth to affect the heart, *whenever it is duly regarded;* and they authorize the broad assertion, that it is *impossible* for any man to continue in sin, who steadily contemplates the motives which are adapted to win him from it; *he must disregard them, or he will infallibly repent.*

In perfect accordance with this view is the language of holy writ, in which we suppose every true christian will be ready to describe his own conversion: "*I thought on my ways*, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psalm cxix. 59.) Thought-

fulness is the first of all hopeful signs; and it will be fully admitted, we imagine, that conversion commences and is carried on by the influence of clear, vivid, and powerful views of divine things; that is, to say, by having the *attention* deeply engaged on them. Then what was seldom thought of becomes ever present, it cannot be forgotten; and the more intently it is dwelt upon, the deeper becomes the conviction of its importance, and the more decided its influence upon the heart.

Let us now request any devout reader to examine how it is with him in his closet. On his entrance there it may be conceived that he finds a painful degree of worldly-mindedness and insensibility to divine things, much deadness of heart, and perhaps an entanglement of his affections with some sinful object. An hour spent in fervent exercises of secret piety awakens his heart, destroys the fascination of sin, and brings him near to God. But what are the exercises which have produced this result? They are greatly diversified, no doubt; but they are in substance only two, meditation and prayer—one grand object of prayer also being that the heart may be enlarged and quickened in meditation. The great power of religious retirement lies in its adaptation to set before us the glories of the world to come, to exhibit them distinctly, and to engage on them a full and solemn attention. To this point the labours of closet piety are mainly directed, and only so far as it is attained is any benefit derived. Hence the value and importance of the perusal of the di-

vine word, of examination of the heart, of a review of the Lord's dealings with us, and an observation of our ever varying circumstances; and hence, in truth, one great part of the value of prayer itself which, above all other exercises, brings us into close contact with eternal realities, or cuttingly convicts us of our thoughtlessness, while we bow in the very presence of those awful things by which our whole hearts ought to be absorbed. If there be any particular object to be attained, as for example, some special sin to be mortified, we look at it in the various lights in which its guilt, ingratitude, folly, and mischief appear most conspicuous; when these fix our attention strongly, the resolution to mortify that sin is produced and confirmed, and not till then. It is the same in every other case; and it is wholly on this principle that we rest the truth of the general sentiment, which universal experience confirms, that the vigour and growth of piety are always proportionate to the extent and liveliness of its secret exercises, or in other words, to the attention engaged by the objects to which piety itself relates.

It may perhaps be observed, that we have hitherto made no mention of those gracious aids of the Spirit which are exerted in conversion, and enjoyed in devotional retirement; and we may even be asked whether our plan leaves any room for them. Our answer is briefly this: We entertain the fullest conviction, that all holy emotions and enlargement of heart in meditation arise from the

influence of the Holy Spirit, and are never enjoyed without him. We conceive, however, that his work is not to render meditation effectual to touch the heart, which it would do without him, and must do, from the very constitution of man; but to induce meditation itself,—to fix our thoughts intently on divine things, *which we never should do without him.* Such is his office as described in holy writ, to "take of the things of Christ and show them unto us." (John xvi. 14.) Such is the import of many of the petitions we address to him, that he will "turn away our eyes from beholding vanity," and not suffer vain thoughts to lodge within us. (Psalm cxix. 37.) Such is his actual course of proceeding; for whenever he does produce deep exercises of heart, it is by enlarged views of sacred objects. The use thus made of consideration by the Spirit himself, as the instrument for accomplishing all his purposes in the conversion, consolation and sanctification of men, is a manifest proof of its adequacy and certain efficacy; since, as, on the one hand, it is impossible to conceive he would employ an instrument not fitted for its end, so, on the other, it is evident that the instrument *does* answer all the ends for which he employs it. Let but the same instrument be similarly employed, it matters not by what hand, and it will produce the same result. Hence may be seen, therefore, the relation and the consistency between the asserted ability of man and the aid of the Spirit. The Spirit does nothing more than lead us to due consideration; but we are able

to give due consideration to any object without the Spirit; wherefore we have power, without the Spirit, to do that which we actually do only under his influence. The only instrument which the Spirit uses to accomplish the whole of his work, is one which we also have power to use; wherefore, also, we have power to accomplish the whole of that work; the only reason why we do not being our aversion to the use of the only instrument by which it can be effected.

If it should be thought that the province thus assigned to the blessed Spirit is too small and insignificant, let any christian observant of his own mind ask himself whether he can, in fact, ascribe to him any more. We do not hesitate for a moment, to ascribe to this blessed Agent all our consolation, our sanctification, our heavenly mindedness, and every other good thing; but we conceive that he produces them *by means of the truth;* and the real question is, whether he effects these gracious results *with or without this instrumentality?* Whatever good work he carries on in the heart, is it not by the divine word, exhibited and applied for this purpose? Such is the tenor of our Saviour's prayer: "Sanctify them *through thy truth*, thy word is truth." (John xvii. 17;) and such, we believe, is the uniform testimony of christian experience.—Now, if the work of the Spirit is carried on by the word of truth, it must be carried on also by the understanding and consideration of man, which form the only avenue by which the truth can reach or af-

fect the heart. Besides, when we say that the office of the Spirit is to lead to consideration, we say a thing by no means insignificant, but very much the reverse; for, in relation to the formation of character and the determination of conduct, consideration is every thing. He who can fix my attention upon various objects according to his pleasure, has the key of my inmost heart, and can mould it to his will, so far as those objects are adapted to exert any influence. Nor is it so small a matter as may be supposed. Let any man try his strength at this occupation, and see how much he can do towards fixing the attention of a person on subjects which he loathes, or to which he is even indifferent, and he will soon learn how little it is. Above all, let him try to engage the close and continued regard of a wicked man to the things of religion, and he will ere long acknowledge that it is no trifling task, that it altogether exceeds the resources of human power, and, little as it seems, is highly worthy of the Almighty and glorious Agent who condescends to perform the deed.

Here we may perhaps be met by the suggestion, that, among the first lessons of divine wisdom, is that of our own helplessness. Most cordially do we concur in this sentiment. It is among the earliest truths that the Spirit teaches; he who has not learned it, is wanting in the very elements of spiritual knowledge, and if there were any system with which this should be found to be uncongenial, it would be effectually refuted by this circumstance

alone. We are not altogether strangers to the *feeling* of helplessness, and the deep anguish with which not only an awakened sinner, but a true christian, often acknowledges that he can do nothing, like a helpless captive, sold under the power of sin. As to holy exercises apart from the influence of the Spirit, we daily feel them to be impossible; nor do we think that any persons use these terms either with more freeness, or with more force, than ourselves. But we have already seen that the use of these terms is by no means decisive of the question at issue. They have a two-fold use, and a two-fold meaning. It requires therefore to be asked, what we mean by them; and this is the more necessary; because only one of their significations is at all appropriate to the connexion in which they are employed. Some persons, when they use these expressions, tell us they mean to acknowledge that they are *without power to do what is good;* others, and ourselves among them, by the same language mean, that their hearts *have a fixed opposition to it.* If we are complained of for using the language in this sense, we not only justify ourselves, but lay the same charge upon our brethren; for, in truth, we use the terms in their right sense, and in the only sense which they can rightly bear. We have already established the principle, that, when these words are applied to a state of mind, they invariably denote determination and not power; and we hold it to be certain that, in this connexion, they do refer to a state of mind, and nothing else; in the

case before us, therefore, they can mean nothing but *a fixed determination*, and persons who use them to denote an imagined want of power are guilty, both of a flagrant perversion of language, and of endeavouring to express what really does not exist.

For, when the matter comes to be examined, it will be found that, with whatever force we may use the terms *cannot* and *impossible*, we do not really mean that we are destitute of power. Suppose me to say, in heartfelt bitterness, "Wretch that I am! How little do I mourn for sin, or love the Saviour! I *cannot* mourn, I *cannot* love. As soon may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as I, who have been long doing evil, learn to do well!" What is the real case which I thus describe? It is *the intensity of a certain state of mind* and nothing more; a case, therefore, from which the idea of *power*, is altogether separate and remote. I mean only, that my feelings are desperately opposed to sorrow for sin and love to Christ. Neither is it a case which we are without the power, that is, the means (see page 111) of altering. Due consideration of the truths adapted to produce sorrow for sin and love to Christ *will produce them*. Hence, accordingly, if we really wish to possess these feelings, we betake ourselves to this very means; as though we should say, "Come, my soul, look at those heart-rending iniquities which grieve thee so little, and lift up thine eyes to the glorious Redeemer whom thou hast found it so hard to love! Wilt thou never melt?" It is in the midst of such exer

cises as these that the heart does melt; nor does it ever yield by any other means than the contemplation, in some method or other, of truths adapted to produce the effect. We may confidently appeal to every christian to say, whether the awakening and increase of devotional feeling is not always proportionate to the exercise of sacred meditation.

To this it may be added, that, if it were strictly true that we had no power, we could attach to ourselves no blame in this respect. If we had been endeavouring to lift an immense weight, and, after our utmost exertion, had ascertained that we could not do it, we should be far from covering ourselves with reproaches, and exclaiming, "Oh, guilty creature that I am!" We should rather resign ourselves to the result, however calamitous, without any feeling of self-reproof. This, indeed, is precisely what some professors do with regard to experimental piety. "I am lukewarm," say they; "and too worldly-minded, I know: but I cannot help it; I can do nothing of myself; I must wait till the Lord pleases to visit me." But what sort of religious experience are we to call this? To us it appears to be one of the most fearful signs of religious declension, and prevailing sin. At all events, Paul's experience was very different when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" And equally different be ours, and that of all our readers! Is it ever well with us, but when the evils of the heart are matter of deep affliction, and severe self-reproach?—But if this feeling be

just, then it cannot be a case in which we are without power; for, in such a case, no just self-reproach could exist.

Should any readers be disposed to question, whether the existence of an evil disposition merely, without the want of power, can constitute such total helplessness and impossibility as we feel, he may notice two points. In the first place, no other cause of our helplessness exists, or can be shown, or conceived to exist; and those who maintain it never do, and never can explain themselves. In the next place, the influence exerted by adverse feeling is exactly proportioned to its strength. Only suppose a case, therefore, in which adverse feeling is of immense force, strong enough to lead a man to disregard all that might subdue it, and then the influence and result of it are as great and as certain as though his very power were destroyed. Exactly such is the state of our hearts towards God; and hence the feeling, so characteristic of christian experience, of *total helplessness combined with extreme criminality*. This combination cannot be accounted for,—we may say it cannot exist, upon any principle but that which maintains *both the depravity and the ability* of man.

Upon no ground have we been more astonished at the resistance made to the admission of man's ability for his duty, than this on which we have now touched. We suppose it is as truly characteristic of divine teaching, to learn that we are *guilty*, as to learn that we are *helpless*. Is any man taught

of God, who has not felt himself justly chargeable with sin, with actual conduct and a state of heart which are wrong, and for which he deserves severe blame and awful condemnation? We suppose we may safely set this down as one of the elementary lessons in the school of Christ. But if a man believes this, we venture to affirm that he does *not* believe himself destitute of power to have been a different man; because, if he did, he could not feel himself justly blameable for sin. While we continue of sound mind, we never can give up the dictate of common sense, that we are not blameworthy for what we could not help; and if we are really convinced that we could not help hating God and his authority, we never shall blame ourselves for doing so. How these two incompatible ideas get into the minds of some pious people, and dwell peaceably together, we cannot imagine, except by attributing to them a want of thought with which we are sorry any of them should be chargeable. If a person under first awakenings and deep convictions of sin, were told that he could not help it, he would not believe; at that time no man believes it: so far as the idea gains any practical influence upon the heart, it diminishes the sense of guilt, and carried fairly out, would destroy it entirely. We have conversed with various persons upon this point, and once found a professor, not wanting in shrewdness, who admitted *that sin is no fault at all;* and however others may strive to evade the formality of coming to so strange a conclusion, little doubt can be

entertained, but that the prevalence of the sentiment of human inability has exerted a wide and lamentable influence, in banishing from the experience of christians a *deep sense of criminality*. We think any close observer will allow that, among the professors of the present day, there is much less of this feeling, than there ought to be, and we unhesitatingly regard it as the offspring of this mischievous falsehood.

It has been conceived that a distinction between *will* and *power* is drawn by the apostle, where he says, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do." (Rom. vii. 18, 19.) For the illustration of this passage the reader is requested to consider the following remarks.

In our account of the structure and operation of the mind, (page 80,) we have pointed out the difference between the habitual prevailing state of the heart, and the transient excitements to which it is subject; the latter are affections or emotions, the former is the disposition. The distinct operation of these upon the conduct may be worthy of a moment's observation. If the emotions excited should be always in harmony with the existing disposition, then there would be no possibility of an action in any degree contrary to the disposition itself: but if there should arise emotions of a different tendency, then there might be, and without watchful effort there would be, an action not corresponding with

the disposition. Human nature is so constituted that such emotions may arise. So it was with man in innocence, and so it is still. Hence results an especial and continual conflict in the renewed man; the disposition being holy, but the heart being also liable to the excitement of unholy emotions, under the immediate influence of which sin may be actually committed, and, in particular instances, the accomplishment of the settled purpose of the mind may be frustrated. This is the state of things which we conceive the apostle to be illustrating in the latter part of the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. "I would do good," says he; "to will is present with me; I delight in the law of God after the inward man." (ver. 18, 19, 22.) These expressions represent his disposition, or the habitually prevailing state of his heart, which dictated a holy and devoted conduct, and gave this main character to his life. He found, however, "another law in his members," an inclination to sin, "warring against the law of his mind," (ver. 23;) and the emotions produced in consequence of this were sometimes strong enough to prevent the fulfilment of his holy and devoted purposes: hence he says, "the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do: to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not," (ver. 18, 19;) I am not watchful, and prompt, and vigorous enough, to maintain inviolate the great purpose of my soul. The whole passage appears to us to be remote from the question of *power*; it describes nothing more than a conflict of feeling.

CHAP. XV.

Objections answered.

Our argument has not been pursued thus far, without meeting with some of the topics commonly adduced in the form of objections to the sentiment of man's ability. We trust satisfactory attention has been paid to these as they occurred; but there are some others of considerable prominence, which it would be improper to overlook.

1. It has been conceived that, *if power in man to come to Christ be allowed, nothing will remain to prevent him from actually coming:* and this would be contrary to the scriptures, which, at all events, declare that *no man will* come to Christ, except the Father draw him.

We believe, in the most unequivocal and decided manner, that no man ever did or ever will come to Christ, unless drawn by the Father; and if the sentiment of man's ability were inconsistent with this belief, we could hold it no longer.

The objection, however, proceeds upon a principle which may be shown to be fallacious. The argument is this: "Allow that a man can come to Christ, and then he will be sure to come; or at least you cannot be sure that he will not:" that is to say, *all that a man can do, he will be sure to do;*

or, at least, *there is nothing that he can do which you can be sure he will not do.* This is manifestly false. Of the many things which a man can do, he may do some, and leave others undone; nay, he infallibly will do so; and which he will do, and which he will leave undone, may be infallibly known by any being who can search his heart,—which God can do, though we cannot. Take any action that you please, therefore, which a man can perform, still it does not follow that he will perform it; nay, I may be infallibly assured that he never will perform it.

The fact is, that *in orler to the performance of any action, two conditions are essentially necessary:* the one is the possession of *power*, or means of performing it, and the other is an *inclination* to do so. If it be to walk into the street, or to rise from my chair—I shall never do this if I have not power to do it: but neither shall I do it, although I have power, unless I have also inclination. Power is not of itself active; it is merely the means of acting, and it sleeps till inclination arouses it. My disinclination to rise from my chair will as certainly prevent my doing so as if I wanted power, since it is one of the conditions essential to the action; so that if by any means you can ascertain how long my disinclination to do so will last, you may predict, with an infallible certainty, that so long I shall not rise from my chair.

This familiar illustration we have taken for the purpose of setting the principle in a clear light; but the principle itself will be found to extend to all

our actions, the greatest and most important not excepted. Our coming to Christ depends upon two conditions; first, our power to come; secondly, our inclination to come. *We certainly shall not come if we have not power: neither, if we have power, shall we come, if we have not inclination.* If we have power, therefore, still it may be true that we shall never come to Christ, because we may never have an inclination to do so.

The whole question, therefore, whether a man who has power to come to Christ, ever will come, resolves itself into this, What is the state of his inclination? Is he inclined to come? Or is he indifferent, yet willing to consider why he should come? Or is he disinclined to come; but only to such a degree, that he still is ready to listen and reflect? Or is his disinclination so strong as to become the habitual and prevailing state of his heart, and to induce a determined disregard of all that might influence him? If the state of a man's mind be such as is described in the earlier of these questions, then we may perchance see the wonder of one coming to Christ of himself: but *if it be truly represented by the last of them, it is plain that he never will come of himself, his disinclination leading to the abandonment of the only means by which he might be brought to such a result.*

We have only to ask, then, *whether the state of a man's mind can be known in this respect: and if so, what it is declared to be.* We have all of us means of estimating the inclinations of others and our own

to some extent, but not so far as to speak certainly of what will or will not be done, either by others or ourselves. There is one Being, however, though only one, to whom all hearts are open, and all thoughts are known; and to him it is fully known whether any man will of himself come to Christ. He has given us the advantage of his knowledge in his holy word, which teaches us that no man ever will so come. The heart he declares to be "desperately wicked;" the thought and imagination of it "only evil continually;" adding, that it is "enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Jer. xvii. 9; Gen. vi. 5; Rom. viii. 7.) We might quote much to this effect; but the sense is, that God, who knows the end from the beginning, has forewarned us that *the evil disposition of a sinner will, in every case, induce him to reject the Saviour.*

What more does the objector want, to satisfy him of this melancholy truth, and to relieve him of his fears that some poor sinner may come to Christ of himself? *Why should he deem it necessary to add to this impediment another, consisting in the want of* POWER? One would be ready to imagine that he does not believe the divine testimony concerning the wickedness of the heart, that he cannot think any man will be so mad, or so wicked, as to keep aloof from Christ *if he has power to come to him;* that he finds a difficulty to entertain so dreadful an opinion of another, or of himself. There is probably more of this scepticism at the bottom of the ef-

forts made to maintain the inability of man than its advocates are aware of. But *let them be aware of it;* and if this be their real feeling, let them manfully avow it. If they will fairly place themselves among the advocates of human goodness, if they will maintain that there are such remnants of right feeling in a corrupt heart, that *a sinner really would of himself turn to Christ, if a want of power were not superadded to prevent him*, then we shall know where they are, and in what company to find them. We do not believe, however, that they will do this; but really we have all of us need to acquire more profound and humbling views of the "nest of serpents" which sin has generated in every man's bosom.

2. Akin to this objection is another, namely, *That if a man is allowed to possess power to be what he ought to be, there is no ground for maintaining the necessity of the Spirit.*

We should feel the force of this objection, *if power were the only condition necessary to the performance of an action*; but if there be any other condition necessary also, the necessity of the Spirit's influence may surely be maintained in reference to that, though not in reference to power. It has just been shown that a second condition *is* necessary to the performance of every action, namely, *inclination;* and whether the influence of the Spirit is or is not necessary to produce such an inclination must depend upon the state of the mind itself. *If, as we have maintained, the state of man's heart be*

such, that an inclination to turn to Christ will never arise in it, then the absolute necessity of the Spirit's influence may be intelligibly and justly affirmed. Those who do not coincide in this conclusion must be supposed to doubt, either that inclination is a condition necessary to action, or that the inclination of man is hopelessly averse from God; and they are welcome to either alternative.

Whether that kind of necessity for the influence of the Holy Spirit which arises from the disinclination of the sinner be that which the scriptures exhibit, is a question, which has elsewhere been considered. We will here only repeat our conviction that this is the fact. They do not represent any impediment as obstructing a sinner's conversion but his unwillingness; they cannot, therefore, recognize any other cause as originating the necessity of the Spirit's work.

3. A third objection to the doctrine of human ability has been raised on the ground *that it makes no proper allowance for the effect of the fall.* No doubt, it is said, *man in innocence had power to love God; but if the fall did not deprive him of this power, what has he suffered by it? Is he not in as good a condition as before?*

Nothing can be more certain than that a most serious and melancholy injury was inflicted upon man by the sin and fall of our first parents; and it would be a valid objection against any sentiment that it made no proper allowance for it. But at the same time it is manifest that the fall did not annihilate

man; nor did it destroy *all* his powers, or means of action and enjoyment. Still he retains his senses; still is he an intelligent and rational creature. It is plainly necessary, therefore, to ascertain correctly the nature and extent of the injury thus arising: and by no means allowable to conclude, that because a great mischief has been suffered, that mischief necessarily comprehends the loss of power to do well.

What, then, was the nature of the injury resulting to man from the fall?

It may have been one of two kinds, according to the two-fold aspect in which man himself is to be regarded. Man may be considered, first, as a creature possessing *certain powers*, or means of action; or, secondly, as possessing *a disposition to employ those powers* in certain methods, good or evil. Now the fall may have affected man, either in regard to his *disposition*, or in regard to his *powers*.

The objection alleges that *the injury has fallen upon his powers:* to which we demur for the following reasons.

(1.) *The powers of man are not injured in fact.* Let it only be recollected what they are; the power of perceiving, of feeling, of determining, of attending, of judging concerning good and evil;—these are the powers of man, as a moral agent, the powers which capacitate him to do good or evil. Which of these has he lost? Manifestly none of them. If any reader doubts whether these are all the

powers necessary to moral action, we must refer him to page 98, where this subject is fully treated. We maintain them to be so; and, if they are, the fall has neither destroyed nor impaired any one of the powers of man.

We know very well that these powers do not, since the fall, act as they did before; but *this proves no change in themselves. Their action is altogether affected by the disposition of their possessor;* and to an evil disposition their actual indolence or misemployment is to be referred. If it should be said that disposition must then be necessary to power, we must again refer to first principles, page 134, where it has been shown that disposition is *not* necessary to power, but is totally and essentially distinct.

(2.) *If any of the powers of man had been injured, it would have reduced him in the scale of creatures, which is no where alleged to be the case.*

The different powers, or means of action, possessed by various creatures, constitute the precise circumstance by which one is distinguished from another, and by which the various orders are formed. Creatures possessing means of action in the smallest degree are the lowest in the scale, and every one rises, in proportion as they become more ample. It is the possession of powers superior to any other creature on earth, that places man, as a creature, at the head of them all; and he, like the rest, must rise or sink in the scale of creation, just as his powers may be diminished or increased. To

say, therefore, that man has *less power* than he once had, is to say that *his rank as a creature is lowered;* that his place in creation is altered; that he is somewhat nearer than he once was to the brutes that perish. But do the scriptures ever intimate this? Most certainly not. They declare him to have fallen, *not as a creature*, but *as a holy creature; not in nature*, but in *character; not in power*, but in *disposition*. The place which he has lost is not in the scale of creation, but in that of righteousness; his fall is not from human to brute, but from divine to diabolical.

(3.) *The effect of the fall upon man as a moral agent is uniformly represented as sinful, which a want of power is not.*

All the epithets applied to man *as fallen* are expressive of God's *disapprobation*. He is said to be corrupt, abominable, &c.; so that, whatever the effect of the fall may have been, its *sinfulness* is unquestionable. *The want of power*, however, *cannot have the character of sin*. Power is *the means of action;* to possess which is no virtue, to be destitute of which is no crime. They may be attained in some cases by methods which were virtuous, and in others they may be lost by methods which were criminal: but even in such cases the virtue or the fault characterizes, *not the state resulting, but only the steps leading to it. I am right or wrong only as I use the power I have.* The possession of less power than I had, or than my parents had, may be a calamity to me, but it cannot be a sin; but the

effect of the fall, as now viewed, is sinful ; it cannot consist, therefore, in the loss of power.

(4.) It may be added, *that diversities of power require a corresponding diversity of treatment; while God treats man before the fall and after it precisely on the same principles.*

That *beings who possess different powers, or means of action, ought not to be treated alike, but with a corresponding difference*, seems an obvious dictate of reason and justice. The methods by which you endeavor to induce action should clearly be adapted to the powers on which you work; and if there were any difference in power between *man before the fall*, and *man after it*, there should have been an equal difference in the methods of the divine conduct. *But is there any such difference? Manifestly not.* The circumstances are different, the motives presented are different; but the *principle of treatment is the same.* Innocent man was dealt with in a way of rational motive and persuasion; and with fallen man it is the same. To Adam God said, in substance, Obey my will for certain reasons: and he says the same to us. He left Adam to the result of his consideration, and he leaves us to the result of ours. The duties enjoined on us respectively differ, and the reasons assigned for them, but the method of treatment is perfectly identical. It is persuasion; it is the presentation of motive; it is an appeal to the understanding and the heart. *Would there have been an identity of treatment, if there were a diversity of power?*

We need not be reminded that there is a difference in his treatment of fallen man, *in relation to the promise and the actual influence of his Spirit.* We have already shown our reasons for believing that *the gift of the Spirit is not universal, nor in any way necessary to the just and full responsibility of man.* God holds those accountable for their conduct to whom he does not give the Spirit; with these, therefore, his method of treatment is precisely the same as that which he adopted with innocent man; and we draw the inference that their power is the same.

(5.) We may observe, finally, that *a loss or diminution of power is no where ascribed to the fall.* Every expression seemingly indicative of a want of power has, upon a just interpretation, as we have elsewhere shown at large, a different meaning.

We shall now perhaps be asked, *What effect did the fall produce?* Our answer is, *A change in the disposition of man.* Before it he was a friend to God, after it he was an enemy; before it his disposition was holy and heavenly; after it, it was earthly and corrupt.

That the fall did produce this effect both scripture and observation yield abundant proof, and it probably will not be disputed by our brethren in this argument. The question rather is, *whether a due and sufficient effect is thus assigned to it.* We maintain the affirmative as follows:—

1st. *By the agreement of the sentiment with matter of fact:* it being an obvious fact, that the powers of man, as a rational and moral agent, are not des-

troyed, while his disposition is become desperately wicked.

2dly. *By the impossibility, as already shewn, of referring the effect of the fall to the power of man.* And if it did not touch his power, it could alight on nothing else but his disposition; the only views in which man can be regarded being these two,—either *as a creature* possessing *power*, or as *a moral agent* exercising *disposition.*

3dly. *By the adequacy of the sentiment to account for all the circumstances of the case.*

(1.) Take the fact, for example, that *men are universally wicked*, without an exception in any age, or in any clime; *a wicked disposition of great intensity is quite adequate to explain it.* Or take this, that, though often and loudly called, *no man repents, or of himself will repent;* and *such an evil disposition will account for it with equal ease.* Nor is there any case or aspect of human guilt which may not be resolved on this supposition, quite as satisfactorily as by imagining a want of power. Different as power and disposition are in themselves they agree in this, that they are alike necessary to action; and let which may be wanting, the action is with equal certainty prevented.

[2.] Look again at the fact, that *God is angry with man in the state into which he has fallen*, and calls it sin, which, upon the supposition of its being a want of power, is quite unintelligible: *considering it as the indulgence of an evil disposition, the matter is perfectly plain.* We have shown that disposi-

tion is a voluntary thing, and, in all cases, just matter of praise or blame; if, therefore, a wrong state of feeling is that which has resulted from the fall, the displeasure of God may be expressed against it with the strictest justice.

[3.] Reflect on *the very strong terms in which the wickedness of human nature is described;* the utter extinction of good in the heart, and the overwhelming force of evil: *it needs only an evil disposition of sufficient strength to realize it all.* There is no goodness in power; and therefore loss of power cannot be necessary to loss of goodness. Goodness lies wholly and exclusively in disposition; so that if the disposition is become wholly evil, every spark of goodness is fled.

[4.] Or consider, finally, *the dispensation of God towards man;* how, though man has fallen, he still reasons, and pleads, and endeavors to persuade; all which, upon the supposition of the want of power, cannot be deemed less than absurd; but *if an evil disposition be that which distinguishes fallen from innocent man*, every thing is plain. While the rational powers of man remain, persuasion is an appropriate and sufficient means of dealing with him; whether it be successful or not, it has in it no absurdity, no unsuitableness. It is as fit for us as it was for Adam, and lays a foundation of unquestionable justice for responsibility and punishment, proportionate to the motives employed.

It appears to us, therefore, fully sufficient to maintain that the effect of the fall was to change the

disposition of man, and not to destroy his power. The righteousness of his disposition we hold to be totally destroyed; his power, as a moral agent, to be altogether unimpaired.

4. It has sometimes been asked, "How is the assertion that man has power to do good reconcileable with the doctrine of his total depravity?"

The doctrine of the total depravity of man we do most unequivocally maintain; and in order to see how it is reconcileable with his ability to do well, it is only needful to observe wherein the true nature of depravity consists. We suppose we may take it for granted that depravity is evil, or blameworthy. Now we have elsewhere stated (page 120) that good and evil in man have their existence only in the heart, or in the state of the feelings. If a man's feelings be right, every thing will be right, because the feelings regulate every thing; and if any thing in his conduct be wrong, it must, on the same principle, spring from something wrong in his feelings. There is neither good nor evil in any part of man but his *heart*, of the state of which all his actions are but the expression: and if this be the case, depravity is a word which can have reference to the state of the heart alone, inasmuch as it refers to something which is evil. It has no reference, therefore to the power of man, in any view of it, but solely to his disposition; and whatever may be asserted respecting the depravity of man, his power is left wholly out of the question. He may be, and we maintain that he is, totally depraved: and yet,

as we also maintain, his power may be altogether perfect and entire. What we mean by saying that a man is totally depraved, is, that he has a thoroughly wrong disposition: which, it is plain, may consist with the most ample and excellent powers. If depravity means more than this, the case of course will be altered; but we believe we have here used the word in its correct and scriptural signification.

CHAP. XVI.

Objections answered.

5. It has been considered as a weighty objection to the sentiment of man's ability, that nothing is gained by it. The result, it is said, is the same. No more persons are saved; and men, after all, will not repent.

We cannot sufficiently wonder at this objection. As though it were to be considered, in the investigation of a sentiment, *whether any thing would be gained by it!* We are to suppose that an opinion which rests upon slight evidence, or upon none at all, should be readily received, if it seemed likely to yield some advantage; while another, though supported by the strongest evidence, if it have not such a recommendation, is to be rejected. We have been used to think the great question to be, *What*

is the truth? and that it is imperative, in all cases, to do homage to the majesty of truth, by submitting to her authority. Whether, in the exhibition we may think proper to give of truth, we shall give to any topic a more or less prominent place, may well depend upon our view of its profitableness; but surely nothing that is true can rightly be rejected, or denied. To judge every thing untrue which is of no apparent benefit, would be to supercede the use of evidence entirely: and the extensive application of such a rule would assign to the class of falsehoods a large portion of hitherto acknowledged truths. We deem it not too much, therefore, to insist upon an examination of the question according to its evidence, irrespective of its issues. We ask, *Is it true?* and shall justly consider every man, who passes from the question by saying, *What do you gain by it?* as unable or unwilling to meet the proof.

It can scarcely be less than presumptuous, however, *to assume that a sentiment possesses no useful tendency, because it is not apparent to us.* We may be too blind, or too much prejudiced, to observe, or to appreciate it. It is much more reasonable to conclude, that, *if it be true, it must be useful*, on the general principle that whatever is true is so, if it have any influence at all; and this might be maintained more especially in religion, and with respect to the truth of God. If the sentiment in question be true, it is *a part of the truth of God;* a truth which he has revealed, and one which

stands connected with his methods of administration, and the eternal interests of mankind. *Can any such truth be unimportant, or otherwise than of a beneficial tendency?* And if we do not see its advantage, should not this lead us rather to suspect our own ignorance, than to impute folly to our Maker?

In fact, the objection itself proceeds upon a strangely contracted view of the divine dispensations. "The result is the same," says the objector, "upon your scheme, as on ours." Undoubtedly. Did any body ever think of producing a change *in results?* Will not the result be the same on *every* scheme of religious opinion? Do the various and conflicting thoughts of men affect the fulfilment of the designs of God? If it were to make us indifferent to any form of religious belief, that the *result* would not be altered by it, this should equally make us indifferent to *all its forms;* for by not one of them, false or true, will such an effect be produced. Though truth were banished from the world, God would work his sovereign pleasure. He that sets light by one opinion because no more souls will be saved by it, may for the same reason set light by every other; let him hold which he will, just the same number of sinners will be saved.

The importance of religious opinions lies in this, that they exhibit the character of God and man; and the reason why it is important that religious opinions should be *correct*, is, that it is important for these topics to be exhibited *in their true light.*

The aspect in which the character of God is exhibited is important to his honour in the world, and to the influence which it is adapted to produce upon mankind; while an accurate knowledge of our own character is obviously essential to the very elements of real wisdom. The test, therefore, to which the sentiment in question is justly liable, is this: *Does it represent the ways of God, and the character of man, in a light justly influential? If it does, it has all the beneficial tendency which any sentiment can have.*

That the assertion of man's ability for right action does lead to representations of God which are highly honourable to him, needs no proof. It throws a flood of light on the justice of his commands, and the reasonableness of his expectations. It establishes beyond controversy the criminality and desperate wickedness of man, and sheds a glorious lustre on the goodness, forbearance, and redeeming love of the Almighty. It shows that all his ways are both equitable and kind, and that the whole blame of sin and ruin lies with the transgressor himself. Are these matters of no importance? Can they be deemed so by any friend of God? What friend of God is he, who is not delighted by every augmentation of light which can be thrown upon his ways? Or are they unimportant in relation to man? Is it nothing to gain an answer to some of the many cavils by which sinners repel or evade the call to repentance? Is it nothing to fix upon their consciences a conviction

of guilt, and to leave them consciously without excuse?

But, after all, *if you do this*, says the objector, *none of them will any more repent, till the Spirit change their hearts.* True, undoubtedly: but, if you are silent on this ground, let every other topic of address be abandoned also. Why do you preach at all? Not one will be converted by that, unless grace change the heart. But, if we address sinners at all in a way adapted to affect them, in expectation of God's blessing, *every topic* adapted to such an end should be adduced, and the greatest value attached to those modes of address which are best adapted to the design. On these the greater blessing may be expected.

It seems to have been thought by some persons, that *the adaptation of the gospel to the conversion of sinners is arbitrary*, a mere matter of divine appointment; that there is *no fitness in the gospel itself to accomplish the end*, but that it does so only because God has been pleased to determine that it should; and that, if he had pleased, he might as well have ordained that conversion should have resulted from the teaching of geography, or the lowing of oxen. Such an idea is fully implied in the manner in which they justify the preaching of the gospel to those who have no power to repent; and, on the same ground, they feel little inducement to adopt a mode of address because of its adaptation to convince or impress the mind. *Nothing can be more derogatory to divine wisdom, or inconsistent with ob-*

vious fact. When the means which God has appointed for conversion are examined, they appear directly and admirably fitted to the design. Intended to operate upon an intelligent and rational creature, whose feelings are to be reached through his understanding, every word of scripture appeals to the understanding, and the whole exhibits a collection of motives, adapted to the nature of man with infinite skill, and possessing an unmeasurable and almost overwhelming power. Is it imaginable that an apparatus like this would have been employed by accident? Besides, the pursuit of an end by suitable means, is one of the first dictates even of ordinary wisdom. It is that which God has made every creature to do; and creatures, in their excellencies, are the images of himself. He has so constituted us as to deride even the attempt to accomplish an object by means known to be unsuitable. And is it conceivable, that, after putting this impress on the whole creation, and with a boundless store of means at his command, he should, in the most glorious of all his works, and one which he summons all intelligent beings to behold, violate his own law, and exhibit himself in a light which it would be impossible to admire, and almost impossible not to deride?

The *manner in which the influences of the blessed Spirit are imparted, fully accords with the view we are taking.* Much of sovereignty, doubtless, may be observed in it; but, at the same time, much of wisdom. The kind of preaching which *has been*

made most useful, has been that which *was adapted* to be most useful; that, namely, which has been most scriptural in sentiment, most solemn in manner, most earnest and affectionate in spirit. We may hence conclude that *God chooses to work by adapted means:* and that, where the means are best adapted, he will give the largest success.

And if this be the case, we gain much by every approach to accuracy of sentiment. It is not only that our representations are more fitted to be useful, they are also more secure of a blessing. We are honouring God, by speaking what he has bidden us; and we may hope to be honoured by him, in the reception of our message. In this respect there is a high bounty attached to the rectification of our mistakes, since every improvement in handling the word of truth renders it more probable that God may employ us for good.

6. The principle we have maintained has been conceived *to throw perplexity on the important doctrine of regeneration.* Regeneration, it is said, is the commencement of spiritual life; and, as the existence of spiritual life must precede the performance of spiritual actions, an unregenerate person cannot have power to perform them.

This is a very instructive instance of the facility with which mistakes may be committed, in the use of the metaphorical language with which the scriptures abound. It will scarcely be doubted, we suppose, that the term *regeneration*, as applied to the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul of

man, is a metaphor. By all means let us have its true and full import, but *no more.* In order to ascertain this, regard should be had to the series of metaphorical representations of which it forms a part. By nature sinners are said to be *dead;* under the influence of the Spirit of God, they are said to be *alive;* and that exercise of his power, by which this change from metaphorical death to metaphorical life is produced, is appropriately called *regeneration.* But, dropping the metaphors, what is the actual matter which they are employed to illustrate? It is neither more nor less than *the state of a sinner's mind;* but it is the state of his mind in a particular respect. The whole series of expressions just quoted refer not to its *active*, but to its *quiescent* state; that is to say, they do not denote what it is in action, but what it is at rest. They show what it is before it acts, and as it is prepared, or predisposed to act. This distinction is clearly founded in fact. It is manifest that there must be a period, when, in reference to any given subject, no actual feeling exists, as in infancy, or in cases of previous ignorance; yet, while no feeling actually exists, there may also be a predisposition to some specific state of feeling on this very subject, in accordance with which the feelings, when awakened, will naturally be. So, for example, if I have unconsciously inflicted an injury, while I am ignorant of it, I have no feeling concerning it; when I come to the knowledge of it, I may feel more or less sorry, or perhaps not sorry at all; but what de-

termines the nature and degree of these feelings? Obviously, in the first instance, the state of mind previously existing; as the enmity or love I might bear towards the particular person injured, or the tenderness or unconcern I might cherish respecting the welfare of others in general. This quiescent state of the heart is of great importance, as powerfully predisposing to specific courses of feeling and action. It may tend to good or evil; but when involuntary, it attaches neither praise nor blame, as is pre-eminently the case with infants, in whom a cause predisposing to sinful action must be held to exist, since those who live invariably do evil, but to whom, while yet incapable of any moral action, it seems impossible to ascribe sin. This quiescent state of the heart differs both from disposition and inclination, which are states of *active* feeling (page 109); and no better word for it occurs to us than the *bias* of the heart. Man, in innocence, had a bias towards holiness; since the fall he has a bias towards sin, and this bias tends to produce sinful action, which, nevertheless, the conscience is adapted and able to prevent, though it does not.

Now it is this quiescent state, or bias of the heart, to which we conceive the terms *death life*, and *regeneration* to refer. *Death* and *life* do not denote action of any kind, but *states*, out of which peculiar and appropriate actions arise; and *regeneration* is the act by which the former state is destroyed and the latter induced. The bias of a man's heart towards sin is called *death;* a bias towards holiness is

called *life;* the destruction of the bias towards sin, and the production of a bias towards holiness, is the precise act of the Spirit, which is called *regeneration*, or giving life to the dead. Its connexion with conversion is easily illustrated. While unconverted, this bias towards sin induces a man to disregard every thing which tends to make him uneasy in a sinful life, and hence his fearful and criminal perseverance in it; but, when this bias is removed, and a bias towards holiness imparted, then he begins to attend to the truths hitherto neglected, and in proportion as he attends to them, they also work upon him, and produce all the varied phenomena and results of actual conversion to God. We may take this opportunity of expressing our opinion, in opposition to a recent respectable writer,* that the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is *direct, and not by means of the truth;* and that it is not designed to accomplish *something for which the word was never fitted*, but, on the contrary, that it is *intended to produce the very result which, if due consideration were given, the word would produce without it.* May we be allowed to add our conviction, that an observation of the distinction upon which we have here dwelt would facilitate, if it would not even close, the long-perplexed inquiry respecting the identity and priority of regeneration and conversion?

Whether this idea of regeneration may satisfy

*Mr. Orme: Five Discourses, pp. 76—80, and Note T.

our companions in this argument, we know not, nor can we here enter into a discussion of it; it is, we hope, intelligible to our readers, and it is in our own view scriptural and satisfactory. It entirely removes the imaginary difficulty before us. For if regeneration have respect exclusively to *the state of mind* in man, it can have no respect whatever to his *power*, which, as we have seen, is altogether distinct from his state of mind, and unaffected by it; so that whether regenerate or unregenerate, he is the same in power, though he differs widely in moral bias. It is quite true that regeneration must, in all cases, precede holy action, because the state of the sinner's mind, which is so desperately wicked as otherwise to prevent it, must be changed; but this proves only that an unregenerate man has *no disposition* to perform holy actions, and leaves him in full possession of the *power*.

Before dismissing this objection, we may observe that it rests upon the extreme ground of denying the obligation of unregenerate men altogether. If carried out, it leads to an abandonment of all the commands and exhortations which God has addressed to men as such, that is, to men unregenerate. This alone might induce any reasonable man to suspect it, and will instantly satisfy many of our readers of its fallacy.

7. It has been said that *ungodly men in general entertain the opinion of their ability to do their duty, and that the fondness with which they cling to this notion demonstrates its fallacy.*

This is a strange argument in its *principle*. Every idea which wicked men universally entertain, it appears, must *for that reason* be false. Yet a sense of obligation and duty, of right and wrong, and other dictates of conscience, are found more or less distinctly in wicked men, at least as generally as the notion of their ability, and by this process all these would be demonstrated to be false. The scriptures on the contrary, clearly intimate that the consciences of fallen men retain some remnants of truth, which constitute the law written in their hearts and make them "a law unto themselves," Romans ii. 14, 15; and the conviction of their ability for duty may, for aught that yet appears to the contrary, be one of these lingering principles of rectitude.

The argument is equally delusive in its *details*. If ungodly men at large do think that they have ability to do well, *it is by no means an opinion to which they cling with any fondness*. On the contrary, they are for the most part extremely glad to rid themselves of it, and they eagerly avail themselves of every expedient by which its force may be diminished. Hence the prevalence of the doctrine of fatalism among the heathen nations, and the philosophical, or more thinking portion, of enlightened countries; hence the perpetual tendency, even in the commonest minds, to make endless excuses for misconduct, directed to the point that they could not help it; and hence the readiness with which the same sentiment has been imbibed from the preachers of the divine word, until, though still contended

with by an honest conscience, it has spread over the whole surface of a professedly christian land. We have little doubt, that, in defiance of inward remonstrances, multitudes do believe that they can do nothing, that they are very glad to believe it, that many more would believe it if they could, and that even those who do not believe it think there must be some truth in it, since it is so often and so prominently made part of pulpit instruction; but it is far worse than all this, that the expression of such a sentiment by the ministers of the gospel should fall in with the depraved wishes of their hearers, and either, on one hand, tend to silence their inward monitor, and release them from the last restraint placed on their vicious courses by their Creator, or, on the other, violate the dictates of conscience, shock the common sense of mankind, and give occasion to those whom our ministry should convince and persuade, to turn the whole into ridicule and contempt. This *we know* to be the effect of such preaching upon ungodly men; and we have felt a more pungent affliction than we have power to express, that the wiles of Satan should thus have converted men, by whose instrumentality his kingdom should have been shaken to its foundations, into agents for propagating and perpetuating the delusions in which its main stability consists.

To us it is a convincing proof that the sentiment which affirms man's inability is false, that, after all which has been said in favor of it, it cannot be fixed on the conscience of mankind. On account

of this absurdity, some men discard religion altogether, while others, though glad enough to avail themselves of it as a cloak for sin, and as a means of parrying every appeal to their consciences which may be made by the ministers of the gospel, do not believe it in their hearts. Why will any persons continue to labor in so hopeless a cause, and, above all, to identify religion with a contradiction of the indestructible common sense of mankind?

The mischievous idea which ungodly men do entertain of themselves, and of which it is so hard to divest them, is, not that they are *able* to do well, but that they are *disposed* to do well. They maintain that they have good hearts, that they wish to be good people, that they do the best they can, and would do better if they could. They are willing enough to confess *weakness*, but not *wickedness*. This is their ruinous self-flattery, exalting themselves in their own eyes, contradicting the testimony of God leading to a rejection of the gospel, and inducing fatal slumbers. It is the contrary of this which they find so hard to learn, and which, indeed, none ever do learn but as taught of God. Will any reader, who knows any thing of experimental piety, decide this question by an appeal to his own consciousness? What was the discovery which divine instruction led you to make? Was it not that your heart was *determined against God and holiness, and so desperately determined as to yield to none but an Almighty power*? You have imagined yourself *disposed to good*, you found that you *loved evil;* and

the discovery was associated with a sense of vileness, and emotions of self loathing, which no perception of *mere weakness*, or want of power, could ever have produced.

8. It has been said that, *in maintaining the ability of man, we maintain also free-will.*

Of all the imputations brought against us, this is perhaps the strangest, since it shows, not only an entire ignorance of the bearings of the controversy, but an almost incredible inattention to the language employed in it. We maintain that *man* is *free;* but we deny *the will* to be either free or bound, since, from its nature, it is not capable of being so. By *free-will*, however, we suppose our brethren to mean *a disposition to goodness;* an actual choice of holiness, or a willingness to choose it; and this our whole treatise goes, in the strongest possible manner, to *deny* to man. While we affirm that he *can* turn to God, we are continually also affirming that he *will not:* what other reason, indeed, can we assign why he *does not*? Those who assert that they have not *power*, are the parties who have the opportunity, if they please, of cherishing the fancy of a good disposition in sinners, inasmuch as, if they had one, according to them, it could be of no avail to their conversion. Upon our principles, the whole stress of men's impenitence is laid upon their determination not to repent, which is exhibited in a much stronger light by us than by our brethren, and yet they are amusing themselves, and deluding their

followers, by hurling at us the charge of maintaining free-will!

9. *The novelty of the ground now taken, in asserting that man is* ABLE TO *do his duty*, has been alleged as another ground of objection. Even Mr. Fuller, it is said, and all divines of that class, have hitherto admitted a *moral inability*. Why need you go further?

There is one sense in which the writer is far from pleading guilty to the charge adduced. He can revere no doctrine which is not *as old as the bible;* and when it is shown that any he holds are less ancient than this, he will immediately relinquish them. *He considers the tenets he opposes as the novelties.* An antiquity of a few hundred years is totally insufficient to exempt them from this character.*

In reference to the controversy, however, which has been carried on in England within the last hundred years, in which the late Rev. Andrew Fuller bore a conspicuous part, and the ground which he has taken in it, the author must, perhaps, to some extent, though not to a very considerable one, admit the allegation of novelty.

Mr. Fuller maintained, that *the only obstruction to a sinner's repentance was the aversion of his heart to God*, that is to say, an evil disposition; in this grand point entirely concurring with the present writer. This he still called *inability;* but, to

* See Ryland's Memoirs of Fuller, chap. i. first Edit.

separate from the term the inapplicable and mischievous ideas involved in its ordinary use, he adopted the method previously used by some American and other divines, of calling this supposed inability of sinners to repent a *moral inability*. By this phrase he explains himself to mean *such an inability as consists in a want of disposition;* thus distinguishing it from a *natural inability*, the existence of which he denied.* This very statement leads directly to the conclusion to which we have come; for if moral inability be such as consists in a want of disposition, natural inability must be such as consists in a want of means, there being no other ideas to which ability has ever been referred but these two, means and disposition. Mr. Fuller, therefore, really held what we have maintained, namely, *that man possesses full power to repent, in as far as the possession of means without disposition constitutes power*. Whether the possession of means without disposition does constitute power, in the full and proper sense of that term, we have considered at large, page 110; and we entertain no doubt but Mr. Fuller would have heartily agreed in our conclusion.

The appropriateness and expediency of using the term *moral inability* to denote a wrong disposition is highly questionable. It satisfied the disputants of past days; but, at the time, it rather concealed than exhibited the truth contended for, and ever

*Ibid. chap. viii. p. 353. first Edit.

since, it has rather occasioned perplexity than facilitated inquiry. The existence of *inability* on the part of sinners was the main position which the opposing divines had maintained; and the adoption of the phrase in question permitted them to continue to maintain it. Its being qualified by the term *moral* was of little consequence; *still*, they said, *you allow inability to exist, and whether natural or moral makes no difference*, IT IS INABILITY. Hence, though the argument of Mr. Fuller was triumphant, much less was gained by it than it contemplated and deserved; and to this day both clergy and laity are suffering, to a great extent, the very same mischiefs from the notion of *moral inability*, which that of *natural inability* had previously inflicted. The question really at issue has been kept at bay by that inappropriate and ill chosen term; and the battle remains yet to be fought on the clear and open ground,—*Is there, or is there not, on the part of a sinner, any inability at all?*

It may be observed, also, that, although the idea which Mr. Fuller attached to the phrase *moral inability* was clear and definite enough, yet it is liable to receive, and has often received, a very different interpretation. "*Moral inability!*" says a reader of this language; "and what is moral ability or inability? Moral ability surely must be *such an ability as is required to the performance of moral actions* or at least to the performance of actions morally good; and if I have not such ability, no actions morally good, can be required of me." This is not at

all an unnatural or unreasonable interpretation of the terms, but the idea itself is altogether erroneous; moral ability in this sense, or ability to perform actions morally good, consisting merely in the possession of intelligent faculties and the power of moral judgments, which are possessed by every man of a sane mind.

We are very willing to admit that the term *inability* may be applied to the *want of disposition* in an *analogical* sense, as *cannot, impossible*, and others frequently are; but we must maintain that it is *only* in an analogical sense it can be so applied. This is the pivot of the whole dispute. If it be as we affirm, then the combination of terms in question is inappropriate; it is *not literally and strictly true*, that is, it is not true in its ordinary and apparent sense. We do not deny that words may be, and often are, used out of their strict and literal meaning; but words should not be so used in argument, and most especially not the words which express the very ground of debate, and the precise point of contention. Metaphors and analogies are excellent for illustration of an admitted sentiment, but wretchedly confounding in the examination of a contested one. If we wish any clearness or conclusiveness of argument, nothing is more important than to reduce every principal word we employ to its strict and literal meaning, and never to use it in any other; but above all things is this desirable, we may say it is indispensable, with the primary terms. On this ground we conceive the phrase *moral ina-*

bility should be altogether dropped, inasmuch as it proceeds upon an analogy which is extremely likely to mislead; let us rather know in plain terms what is meant by it, and make *that* the subject of our discussions. There is no difficulty in this. The terms *moral inability* mean a want of disposition, a phrase which ought in all cases to become its substitute. What must we think, if the clearness and simplicity which it throws into the argument should be felt as an objection to this proposal? If the terms *moral inability* are to be retained on any reasonable ground, it must be because they are *strictly and properly applicable to a want of disposition;* an opinion which we shall be extremely happy to see any one attempt to establish.

If the term *inability* be in strictness inappropriate to the subject, there is the more reason it should be abandoned, because there is a perpetual and irresistible tendency in all upon whom the argument bears to understand it literally. Thus when we urge a sinner to repent, he replies, But you tell me I am *unable;* in this case plainly taking the word *unable* in its *strict* and not in its *analogical* sense. If we have used it in that sense, he fairly repels our exhortation, and may defy us to meet his argument: if we have not used it in this sense, it behoves us then to tell him so, and say, *I do not mean that you are really unable; you are strictly and truly able to repent.* And if this is the point to which a single observation of an ungodly man may drive us, why should we set out with the tenacious and prominent

use of a phrase which we must so soon abandon, and even apparently contradict?

The names of those who originated and conducted the great and important discussion respecting the duty of man, called the modern question, deserve to be had in everlasting remembrance, nor can the author ever forget, or fail most gratefully to acknowledge, his deep obligations to them. But he feels no apology due for differing from them. One thing they taught him was to think for himself; and he is sure they would be happy, in having led others to a view somewhat clearer and more accurate than their own. He has no name to add weight to his opinions; but he claims not to be judged at a human bar. Why would his readers inquire whether he agrees with Mr. Fuller? Let them ask only whether he is consistent with the oracles of God.

If it were of any importance, however, (and to the writer it is certainly matter of gratification,) it might be stated, that in this sentiment he is far from being alone. He has reason to believe, that not a few of the most able and most useful ministers of the gospel in various denominations mainly, if not entirely, agree with him; and that the same sentiments are entertained by many judicious christians in private life, who are longing to see their teachers escape from the loosening bonds. He has a cheering confidence that the bonds *are* loosening, and is sorry that any worthy men should identify themselves with a falling system.

CHAP. XVII.

Considerations for those who may not be convinced.

However willing we may be to hope that the preceding pages may have carried conviction to some of our readers, it were too much to suppose this to have been the case with them all. We shall probably part with some of them without having produced this result. Concerning them we have no wish, but that they would give repeated and serious examination to whatever may seem to them adapted to the attainment of truth. If, after all, they retain the opinion which we have combated, we leave two points for their consideration.

1. Those who find it hard to admit that a sinner *can* turn to God, should consider whether it is not quite as hard to maintain firmly that he *cannot*.—The position we have taken is this; that *a sinner can come to Christ, whether he will or not*; that is, suppose either case, that he will, or that he will not, still he *can* come. The opposite sentiment, fully and fairly expressed, is, that, *whether he will or not a sinner cannot come*. If our brethren in the argument do not mean this, it is quite time they should be explicit with themselves, and penetrate the fallacy which must be lurking somewhere amidst the terms they employ. If they do fairly mean this,

really it is rather a hard case. In one alternative indeed, on the supposition that the sinner will not come, the alleged *cannot* might be of little consequence, though still it would be calling things by wrong names, and withholding from God the glory which is his due. But let us take the other alternative, and say, *If a sinner will come to Christ, he cannot*:—what are we to think of this? It will doubtless be met by an immediate cry, that a sinner will not come, that such a supposition never will be realized, and that therefore it is unfair. We know that such a supposition never will be realized: but we cannot allow it on that account to be unfair. The proper way to try a sentiment or an argument, is to make various suppositions, as many indeed as it will possibly admit of, and see how it appears in those varied lights; for every portion of truth is like a fragment of complex mechanism, it will fit no where but in its place, and it will fit exactly there. We are willing that our position should be tried on either supposition, either that a sinner will come, or that he will not; and if our brethren are not willing that theirs should be put to a similar test, it must be either because they have, or ought to have, some want of confidence in their argument. If the argument itself will not bear this examination, it is undoubtedly fallacious; and every man who has any regard to truth or honesty should immediately renounce it. Let us proceed to the trial.

One of the *supposable* cases involved in the statement that, whether he will or not, a sinner cannot come to Christ, is that a sinner may be willing to come to Christ, and yet not able; a case indeed apparently contemplated by some, who to be more explicit than their neighbors, take pains to reiterate that men have *neither will nor power* to return to God. Let us then imagine such a person before us. By the supposition, he is willing to come to Christ; his resistance is subdued, the enmity of his heart has given way, he has renounced sin and the world, he is in a state of right feeling towards God, and quite ready to return and submit himself to the appointed Saviour; but—*he cannot!* What is the meaning of this? He *cannot?* What is to prevent him? Let it be explicitly stated what cause can interpose its baneful influence to obstruct this blessed return. We have heard of many things which make a sinner unwilling, and so prevent his conversion; but here is a case supposed in which all these hindrances are removed, and yet there is the strange mystery of some other hindrance, to prevent a willing sinner from bowing to the Saviour! In the name of all that is reasonable and honest, we demand that this hidden, mysterious, and as yet nameless power, should be dragged forth to light, that we may have an opportunity of ascertaining its nature, and counteracting its influence.

Nor is this all. In what a pitiable condition is the sinner thus placed! He has been told to come

to Christ, under assurances of mercy; and he is willing to come but he cannot. The state of his mind is altered, as prescribed, but not his condition of wrath. Not having come to Christ, he is still under condemnation, though he is no longer in love with sin, nor at enmity with his Maker. He is bound down for destruction, therefore, by something else than his sins; he would escape, but he cannot. There is something in this representation truly horrible, and adapted to dissociate from the perishing sinner every feeling of blame, and render him an object of unmixed and tender compassion. Hitherto we have been accustomed to regard him as liable to perish, only because he was wedded to his sins, and as rushing on destruction in a way of wilfulness and criminality, which rendered his punishment as just as it is awful. But every thing must now be viewed in a different light. Unfortunate wretch! If he could, he would escape. He has no love of sin, no enmity to his Maker, no rejection of the Saviour, but some dreadful power will not suffer him to accomplish his wishes, and binds him over to perdition. Perish, then, miserable victim! The whole creation will sympathize with thee in thy fall.

Once more. What must we think of the *author* of such a state of things as this? Is there in such a condition any thing merciful, any thing equitable? Is it not one from which all our feelings revolt with horror? And yet, if the sentiment under consideration be true, the possible existence of such a con-

dition must be ascribed to the most glorious and blessed Being in the universe; for he has determined the details of our natural and moral situation.—How can it for a moment be supposed, that a being infinitely just and merciful should have adopted a constitution capable, under any circumstances, of producing such an alternative as this, and requiring only a due consideration of what he himself has most earnestly pressed upon their attention, in order actually to produce it; while at the same time he professes to have made a most gracious provision for the salvation of the guilty upon their return to him, and calls and invites sinners, who, when they hear and would accept the call, find, unexpectedly that they cannot do so, and sink helplessly into hell, with all the apparatus of mercy turned into a bitter mockery of their ruin.

Every one must be deeply convinced that the ever blessed and glorious God is infinitely remote from the possibility of such an imputation. Nor do we wish to insinuate, for a moment, that those who are opposed to us on the question at issue make any approach towards such an imputation; they probably regard it with as deep horror as ourselves; but it is not the less true, that the consequences we have exhibited are involved in the sentiment they maintain; and if they are to be avoided, it can only be by abandoning their ground. Let them recollect their assertion—that, whether he will or not, a sinner cannot come to Christ: and then let them trace our deduction from it most rigidly, determined

to detect its fallacy, if it be fallacious, but equally determined to relinquish their tenet, if it be correct.

The reader can scarcely have failed to perceive, in some points of the argument, an appearance of contradiction and perplexity. We have spoken, for example, of a sinner's being no longer an enemy to God, and yet not being reconciled to him; when, in fact, not to be an enemy is the same thing as being reconciled. We have been compelled to speak in this way, because the statement against which we argue overlooks the fact, that the terms *coming to Christ*, *being reconciled to God*, &c. are simply expressive of *a state of mind;* the state of mind being that, also, with which salvation is connected. To say, therefore, that a man cannot be reconciled to God, even if he ceases to be an enemy to him, is to say that he cannot be in a certain state of mind, even if he is in that very state of mind; a direct and obvious contradiction, when drawn out from the familiar, yet ill-understood phraseology, under which the unobservant suffer it to be disguised and concealed.

2. The asserters of the inability of man should inform us *what man can do.* They have been candid enough, on certain occasions, to allow that he can do *something*, though his ability does not, in their view, correspond with his duty; but it is important that they should describe particularly *what man can, and what he cannot do*, and draw an intelligible line of demarcation between these two great provinces of action and duty. The distinction is

unquestionably of considerable moment, and less attention has been bestowed upon it by our brethren than it deserves. So far as their ideas upon it can be collected, they appear to hold, that, though man can neither be or do any thing spiritually good, (that is good in disposition,) yet he can *use the means* for this end; and one writer, who has been unusually explicit upon this subject, has given us the following statement.

"Man is able, and ought to examine the evidences of christianity, and the contents of the inspired volume. He is able, and ought to attend on the ordinances of religion, to retire for serious reflection on what announcements have been made by the preacher; and to examine his own heart and life, by the infallible test of scripture. He is able, and ought to go upon his knees before God, for confession of sin, and supplication for mercy and power. He is able, and ought to avoid the company of the ungodly, and to seek intercourse with those who fear God. He is able, and ought to observe the dealings of God with him in Providence, and inquire what influence they have upon him. He is able, and ought to consider the solemnities of death, judgment, and the eternal state, and the descriptions given of those who are prepared. Will any one deny those things to be within the compass of his own ability, or affirm them to be excluded from the most obvious duties? In this course every one may cherish hope." Douglas's Letter to the Author, p. 15.

It is obvious, upon the face of this statement, that these defenders of man's inability *allow and maintain his ability also, in the same sense, and to the same extent as ourselves.* We have asserted nothing more than that man can *use the means* of being and doing all that he ought to be, of which every reader may satisfy himself by referring to our definition of power, page 110; and this it seems, part of our brethren in this controversy freely allow. There is, therefore, no real difference between us; and the discussion reduces itself to these two points: 1, Whether the means we possess of being what we ought to be are *sufficient;* and 2, whether the possession of such means is properly called *power.* Both these points have already engaged our attention, see pp. 93, 110: we shall here only make two remarks. The first is, that, if we suppose God to have required certain effects to be produced by means which are *not sufficient*, we attach to him the imputation of "gathering where he has not strawed," which he repels with so much indignation when insinuated by the "wicked and slothful servant," (Matt. xxv. 24, 26.) The second is, that, in all ordinary cases, the possession of *sufficient means* is considered as the possession of *power.* He that has sufficient means of doing any thing, *can do it.* If this be an error, let it be corrected in common life; if it be a truth, why should it be rejected in religion?

If we accurately interpret the views of our brethren upon this point, it is clear, that, with all their

array of hostility against us, they really hold the very sentiment for which they make us fight, and for defending which they visit us sometimes with such severe animadversions,—rather an unkind return, by the bye, for our trouble in vindicating their sentiments. Whatever injurious consequences may result from the sentiment itself, the mischief lies as much at their door as at ours; nor can it be much to their advantage, that what they affirm in one form of words they strenuously deny in another.—If, on the contrary, we do not understand them correctly,—*if they do not mean that man can use the means of being what he ought to be,* it will materially aid the discussion if they will have the kindness to explain themselves more fully, and specify distinctly what man can do; a thing which is manifestly important, and ought not to be difficult.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the necessity of the Holy Spirit as implying contrariety of disposition.

We have already seen that the necessity of the Spirit's influence to the conversion of a sinner implies something respecting the condition of a sinner himself; namely, that, without such aid, he would never turn to God. It might be supposed,

y many it has been supposed, to imply, that he is *destitute of power* to do so; a sentiment which we have been examining, and endeavouring to disprove. *What then does it imply?* To this we have already answered in substance, that it implies *contrariety of disposition;* a statement which we now proceed more fully to develope and establish.

It is the more needful to do this, because, as there is a strong tendency, on the one hand, to maintain that *man has not power* to do well, so is there a tendency, on the other, to imagine that *he has a disposition* to do so. Men will much rather confess weakness than wickedness, and cling fondly to the delusive imagination that they would be right if they could: we sorrowfully believe, on the contrary, that the disposition of man is directly, powerfully, and, to use a scriptural expression, "*desperately* wicked." It is not our business here to enter into the proofs of this at large; but to show merely how it arises out of the doctrine we have already established, namely, that of the absolute necessity of the Spirit's influence in order to conversion.

If this doctrine be true, it is but the same thing, in other words, to say that, without the Spirit, repentance will never take place. Now, though there may be an endless diversity of circumstances, there can be only two causes operating to prevent any action: either we have not power, or we have not disposition to perform it. All hindrances may be reduced to these, nor can any other be imagined. If

the Holy Spirit, therefore, be necessary to repentance, it must be either because we have not power, or because we have not disposition to repent without him: but we have shown that we have power, wherefore it must be because we have not disposition.

We now take it as proved that we have power to repent; if, in addition to this, we have also a disposition to repent, it is manifest that we shall do so of our own accord, every action being certainly performed when we have both the power and the disposition to perform it. In such a case the Holy Spirit would not be necessary, seeing that we should repent independently of him; but we have seen that his blessed influence is necessary; whence it follows, that, however we may flatter ourselves, we have not a disposition to repent. To conceive that we are of ourselves disposed to repent, and do every thing right if we could, or as far as we can, is directly to deny the need of the Spirit's energy.

No doubt there are often arising in the minds of men certain thoughts, or perhaps feelings, on the subject of religion, which may be mistaken for a disposition to repent. These are nothing more than admonitions of conscience, or slight emotions of fear or desire. At their greatest amount they have no prevailing influence, they lead to no determination, to no action. In this way, and to this extent, the heart may be affected by many things at the same time, and inclinations excited towards different, and even opposite objects. It is manifest that

such inclinations are of no practical value, and that they indicate nothing respecting a man's character, or what may be expected from it. He may have some inclination to religion, but more to worldliness; and so may be always worldly, in defiance of his inclinations to religion. That which determines character is the *prevailing* inclination, or what we have strictly defined to be *disposition, as distinct from inclination;* and it is this we mean, when we say, man has no disposition to repent.—He may, and often does feel convicted, alarmed, desirous, but his prevailing feelings are always, nevertheless, earthly and unholy; and what we conclude from the necessity of the Holy Spirit, is, that they always will be so. If such feelings should ever arise to a prevailing degree, in that case, repentance would take place without the Spirit, which, as we have seen, will never be the case.

The necessity of the Spirit's influence, therefore, establishes the unwelcome and melancholy fact, that our natural disposition is opposed to God, to our duty, and to our welfare. We love sin, we hate our Maker. This is afflictive; but what follows is far more so. Our disposition, it appears, is thus hostile to God and to our duty, in the midst of circumstances most powerfully adapted to render it otherwise. God has exhibited himself to us in colours of the brightest glory, and of the most heart-touching mercy. Every thing just and weighty in obligation; every thing solemn and impressive in

prospect; every thing winning and constraining in kindness; every thing powerful and generous in motive; every thing by which every chord in the heart might be touched, has been set before us; and yet our disposition is hostile to God, and reckless of our own ruin. Nor is this all. It is desperately so. So wedded to sin, so bent upon self-indulgence, that not all which God has said ever will induce even serious consideration; no patience, no repetition of his calls, no earnestness of importunity, no approach of terrors, will ever change this melancholy mind. His Spirit alone must achieve the transformation. The intensity of evil disposition which this evinces, therefore, is most extreme and astonishing. It can find no parallel. In other cases considerations of duty, of gratitude, of interest, find their way to the heart by which for a time they may have been resisted; but in this, though infinitely the most important, an ill disposition reigns so triumphantly as to repel every attempt.—He that fears his fellow creature, defies his Maker; he that is grateful to an earthly benefactor, insults an heavenly one; he that shrinks from bodily harm, plunges his soul into hell; he that attaches boundless importance to time, trifles with eternity. And all this will he continue to do, amidst the revealed glories of heaven and terrors of hell; amidst the warnings of wrath, and the wooings of mercy; amidst the tears of the Saviour, and the lamentations of angels; amidst the reproofs of his conscience, and the anticipations of destruction. Such,

alas! is man. What words can adequately describe a disposition so deplorable!

The second part of our plan, which was to examine *the aspect of the Spirit's work on the previous condition of man*, has now been executed, and the result of it may be summed up in a few words. The necessity of the Spirit's influence in order to conversion *does not argue a want of power in man, but it does argue a contrariety of disposition:* and this, it is afflictive to say, to an extent most astonishing, and almost incredible. It remains for us to observe, in the last place, the aspect of the Spirit's work in relation to the ways of God.

PART III.

THE ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN RELATION TO THE WAYS OF GOD.

THE ministration of the Spirit, or the employment of his almighty energy to accomplish the transformation of a sinner's heart, is *one of the ways of God*, or a part of his general administration towards the children of men. As such it has by no means an isolated character, but stands connected with all other parts of the same administration; and in this connexion it has features of great excellency and importance. Some of these we have been led indirectly to notice in the preceding portion of this volume; but they call for a more distinct and prominent exhibition.

Before we enter further upon this part of our subject, it will be necessary to observe the two principal views in which the ministration of the Spirit is exhibited to us in the sacred oracles. On the one hand it appears as *an unsolicited effectual operation;* as in such passages as these: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. I will take away the stony heart, and give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you,

and cause you to walk in my ways. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Heb. viii. 10. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Psalm cx. 3.)

On the other hand, it appears as a blessing *to be obtained by prayer:* "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."—(Prov. i. 23. Luke xi. 13. James i. 5.)

It cannot be necessary to enter into any argument upon the point which these passages establish; since, if they do not exhibit a two-fold aspect of the ministration of the Spirit, it would seem difficult to know how language is to be understood. The blessed God, we are informed, sends his Spirit into the heart of some who do not seek him; but he is also graciously willing to impart it to all who do. These two modes of administration proceed upon different, though not jarring principles, and contemplate dissimilar, but harmonious ends; they will require, therefore, a distinct consideration, and it will be proper to begin with the latter.

CHAP. I.

Of the ministration of the Spirit in answer to prayer.

THE attitude which God assumes when he promises to give his Holy Spirit to all who ask it, is that of *grace*, or *kindness*.

In saying this, we wish, of course, that the work of the Spirit should be regarded in the light in which we have already placed it. We are aware that some views of it lead rather to an idea that it is matter of justice, while others might almost authorize the inference that it is matter of cruelty; but we have nothing to do with these views. As we have exhibited it, and we hope we have exhibited it according to the scriptures, it is matter of kindness.

1. It is *more than just*. Between measures of justice and of kindness there is a wide and essential difference. Things just are things due to a man *in right*, the withholding of which would do him wrong. Things kind are things *not due* to a man *in right;* though by the communication of them he might be benefitted, yet, from the withholding of them, he derives no ground of complaint. That which is due in right, therefore, is *simply just*, it is *not kind;* that which is kind is more than just. To take a familiar example: I give to a certain person

ten pounds; if I am in his debt to that amount, it is merely an act of justice; if I owe him nothing, it is of course an act of kindness.

This distinction is strictly applicable to the case in hand. Though it cannot be said that man merits any thing of his Maker, yet, seeing that he has been brought into existence, and placed in certain circumstances, with certain requirements and prospects, certain things are *due* to him from his Maker, in order to give to his own conduct, or to the situation of his creature, a character of equity. To demand what he had not given the means of performing, would be unjust; it is therefore due to a creature, from whom he demands any thing, that he should give the means of performing it: and however apparently lavish the communication of benefits may be, *until they have rendered the condition of the creature in all respects equitable, they are not acts of kindness, but of justice merely.* Nothing is kind, which does not go beyond the limit of justice, and include what is *not due* to the receiver.

Now, of the promise of the Spirit in answer to prayer, we say it is kind; it is more than just. We have endeavoured to show that God has placed man in a condition of *just responsibility, independently of the Spirit:* and that, without any regard to his agency, we have adequate powers to be and to do all that he requires of us, together with motives of great abundance and ample sufficiency. If this be so, he has done all for us that justice demands,

without referring to the Spirit. Or if he has not, what more ought he to do? What is necessary in any case to a state of just responsibility, but the possession of means of acting, together with sufficient motives to act, and a capacity of appreciating them? If it be said, that God ought to give a right disposition, we answer, First, that this is never considered essential to responsibility in any other case: Secondly, that, if it were, responsibility among men could not, in many cases, be established at all, since we cannot give right dispositions; and therefore, servants, children, or subjects, in whom wrong dispositions exist, could never justly be held responsible for their conduct in such capacities: Thirdly, that this would be stultifying his own commands, by bestowing, *as a matter of right to us*, the very thing which he requires *as a matter of right from us:* a right disposition being the sum and substance of all his requisitions. Every thing short of a right disposition God has given; this justice does not require he should give; when, therefore, he promises the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, it is more than just; it is something not due to us; an act of unmixed kindness, independently of which we might be governed, judged, and condemned, *without wrong*.

To see this more clearly, let us contemplate *the attitude and character of those to whom the promise is made.* We are made capable of loving and serving God; we are supplied with sufficient motives for doing so, and these require only consideration in

order to produce their effect with a happy certainty. What is our conduct? Do we reflect on our condition and our duty? Do we dwell on the topics which would win our hearts to God? Do we give serious attention to the motives which we know ought to govern our lives? The very contrary is the fact. We dislike God, and turn away from every thing that would correct our alienation. We fill our hearts with other thoughts, and say, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." What do we then deserve? Pity? Help? The promise of the Spirit? If indeed, we could approach the Almighty, and say, Lord, I have duly considered every thing, and yet I do not find sufficient motives to love thee,—then we might claim help; though that help should rather be the discovery of new and more powerful reasons, than an influence to make insufficient ones effectual; but the neglect and rejection of the truths set before us, is certainly calculated to produce wrath rather than compassion; and if, in these circumstances, the Lord interposes with a promise of his Spirit, it is an act of kindness, not only unequivocal in its nature, but illustrious in its degree.

There is one point of view in which this exercise of divine mercy transcends the unspeakable gift of his Son. That wonderful interposition was designed to *open a way* of escape for the guilty and condemned, and might have proceeded upon the supposition, that men who had sinned would gladly embrace an opportunity of repentance and pardon;

but here is the case of sinners who *will not* repent, of rebels who will not be reconciled, of condemned persons who scoff at pardon, of enemies who deliberately persevere in their crimes. Nothing could be calculated to close the door of mercy like this. It is a new provocation, more aggravated than all which have gone before it, and inexpressibly adapted to produce the abandonment of a sinner to his own ways. Yet, in defiance of this otherwise unheard-of iniquity, does the mercy of God spring forth afresh, as it were, glorying to surmount all obstacles; and this desperate provocation is met by the overwhelming promise, "Turn ye at my reproof; *behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.*" Whence such a mode of conduct has arisen, there is no difficulty in determining. Whence could it arise, but from those depths of self-sprung mercy, of free and sovereign love, which characterize the whole work of redemption? Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory!

It may be observed, further, that the kindness of the promise is enhanced by the *freeness* of it. Every thing is said which may give encouragement to sinners of the deepest criminality, and the most extreme unworthiness. None shall want a welcome, or fail of an ample supply. The blessing is not to be imparted in small quantities merely, or to a few favoured individuals; "For thus saith the Lord, I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. For every one that asketh receiveth, every one that seeketh findeth,

and to him that knocketh, it is opened." (Isa. xliv. 3; Luke xi. 10.) The promise of the Spirit is characterised by the freeness pertaining to all other gospel blessings: it is "without money, and without price; for the Lord giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." (Isa. lv. 1; James i. 5.)

2. If, on the one hand, views have been entertained which would render the promise of the Spirit *a matter of justice*, so, on the other, it has been doubted whether it is of more than *apparent* kindness. Can it be real kindness, it is asked, to promise the Spirit in answer to prayer to those who cannot pray, but are dead in trespasses and sins? Is it any thing more than torturing them by the tantalizing exhibition of unattainable good?

Upon one class of divines these questions bear hard, namely, on those who hold that fallen man is disabled for his duty and his welfare; but let it be recollected, that we hold no such opinion; and, believing that man has power to do what is right and holy, of course, we believe also that he has power to pray. We, therefore, are here involved in no inconsistency.

But, it may be said, men of themselves will not seek it, and this God knows. Undoubtedly this is the fact. But, if it is meant to argue from this that there is any inconsistency in the conditional promise, such a principle will take a much wider range, and cannot be confined to this promise alone. Why, when there are numberless other blessings exhibited in a similar manner, as attainable by

prayer, is this particular blessing, the gift of the Spirit, to be singled out, and separated from its companions? Let not the "exceeding great and precious promises" be destroyed in detail. Whoever attacks them, let him attack them altogether, and then we shall clearly know, both the nature of his object, and the extent of our calamity. Will any man, then, impugn the general principle on which God has proceeded, in opening the throne of grace to mankind at large? With respect to *every blessing* for which he has encouraged us to pray, it may be most truly said, he knows that no man, unmoved by his Spirit, will ever ask for it. What then? Does this perverseness of those to whom it is made invalidate the sincerity of his proposal, and render it hypocritical? Has he taken shelter under their obduracy, in order to practise a mockery of human woe? Because *they* are unwilling, is *his* willingness also to be denied? Or because he knew that they would not seek his favours, he ought perhaps never to have spoken of them; he ought to have viewed their miseries without pity, and to have shut up the bowels of his compassion; he ought to have assumed the character of a judicial destroyer merely, and to have appeared to all worlds inaccessible to the touching aspects of human wretchedness. Seeing that men would not pray, he should have expressed no pity. Cold-hearted sentiment! Scarcely human should the being be deemed, who could act on such a principle respecting his fellow-man; and fearfully regardless

of the divine honour must he be who could recommend it to the adoption of his Maker. True; men will not pray, and God knows it; but they are miserable, and therefore the exhibition of mercy to them flows uncontrollably from the tender mercies of the Lord; not hugest mountains of guilt can obstruct the stream; and that men, having power to embrace the promised good, should also be at liberty to refuse it, flows as necessarily from the constitution of human affairs, a constitution, amidst all its mysteries, wise and holy and good. Now, if it is no inconsistency to promise blessings in general in answer to prayer, neither can it be any to exhibit the influence of the Spirit in that light: for this is but one among a large class of heavenly gifts, which we are thus encouraged to seek.

Let a case be taken from human affairs, as nearly analogous as may be to that which has arisen in the ways of God: and although none will be found perfectly so, sufficient resemblance may be traced for the purpose of the argument. Let us suppose, for example, that a poor wretch, ready to perish with hunger, lies near my door. My first impulse, if I make any pretensions to compassion, is to offer him food. I am given to understand, however, upon authority which I cannot question, and which I do entirely believe, that if I prepare food for him, and invite him into my house to partake of it, he will never come, there being a stubbornness about him, or perhaps a personal dislike to me, which will prevail even over the force of hunger. What course

do I then adopt? Do I shut up my bowels of compassion against him, and close my door, and pass him by, indifferent to his wretchedness? Far from it. I cannot do so. I rather go to him; and say, "Well, I know your obstinacy; but still I am willing to feed you. Whenever you choose to go to my house, you will find an abundant supply." What have I done in this case that is improper or unreasonable? What else could I have done, without doing myself dishonour? And can the conduct of God towards man be more fairly illustrated?

It may be admitted perhaps, that, if the case had no other feature, the example would be satisfactory; but a difficulty may still be started by saying, "*If you had the power of taking away this poor man's obstinacy, and giving him a better disposition, would it then be kind in you to do all the rest, and not to do this too? Now God has such a power in respect of sinners; and unless he exerts this, is not all his other kindness rather apparent than real?*"

We are quite aware of the seeming force of this argument, but we have no wish to shrink from it. There is no doubt at all but this would be an act of yet *greater kindness*, and if it were merely a case of *personal goodwill* between man and man, it might as naturally be expected from the benevolence of the person supposed, as the supply of food. But the case is not of this simple character; and the introduction of this new feature on the one hand requires the introduction of one also on the other, which will totally change its aspect. A

right disposition is that which God requires of every man as his duty; it is a matter in relation to which he is subject to the government of God, and for which he is justly responsible. The case of a sinner towards God, is that of *a subject towards a governor;* and the right disposition which God requires, is to be compared to the dues demanded by the government. Suppose then that the distressed man is your subject, and you are his king. He implores relief, and you reply, Come in, and you shall be assisted. At the same moment certain officers arrest him in your name for non-payment of taxes, which, to accord with the case of a sinner, it is to be supposed he has full power to pay. What is your method of proceeding? Do you remit the taxes, or pay them for him? *If he had no power to pay*, you would gladly do so; but, since he has power to pay, you say, Certainly you must pay the taxes; or if you do not choose to do so, I cannot interfere; the law must take its course. And so, instead of relieving his wretchedness, you would even have him conveyed to prison in your name, and by your authority; when you knew that, by only remitting his taxes, a very easy thing for you to do, you might have made him happy. Is this kind? Your reply is, I must also maintain the authority and administration of the government. These are just requirements, and I must uphold them, or I shall dishonour, and deserve to forfeit my office. Having thus answered for yourself, you have answered also for your Maker; and you have answered satisfacto-

rily for both. A right disposition in us is exactly that to his government, which the revenue is to an earthly one; the requirement of which, being in itself just, it is imperative to maintain.

It is true, that *no actual good results from these promises, to those who will not plead them:* but neither will this justify the conclusion attempted to be drawn from it. Undoubtedly you do a man the *greatest* kindness, if you improve his condition without any effort of his own; but surely *some kindness* is done, if you put him into circumstances in which he may better it himself. Suppose, for example, that you put a sum of money into a poor man's hand, *that* is kind; but is it no kindness if you inform him that it is deposited for him in the bank, where he may receive it at his pleasure? Or, if you should learn that he would not go for it, should you acquiesce in the representation that, because you had only done this, you had shewn him no kindness? Yet it is thus that some persons are disposed to judge of the ways of God. In opening the treasures of his grace to sinners *upon their application*, we maintain that he does them an illustrious kindness; which is not at all diminished by the perverseness which robs them of the benefit, and turns the very proposal into an aggravation of their guilt.

3. Viewing the promise of the Spirit as connected with the conversion of a sinner, there may seem to be another difficulty. It is plain that *the same ill disposition which prevents him from turning to*

God, will equally prevent him from seeking the aid of the Spirit. When he begins to desire and seek this, his mind will have been already turned. This would be a difficulty, if we maintained that the influence of the Spirit was necessary to man's *power* of conversion, so that, in praying for the Spirit, he must be regarded as praying for *power to turn to God*, to do, namely, what he had already done : but we hold the contrary sentiment, that man has power to turn to God without the Spirit. That power lies in his capacity of reflecting on divine truth, which it is his duty immediately to begin and to pursue. The promises made to prayer are intended to relieve him amidst the various exercises to which reflection will give origin. He becomes convinced of ignorance, of hardness of heart, of love of iniquity ; and here the promise of the Spirit meets him, just *where* he wants it, and quite *as soon* as he wants it. It is now only that he begins to feel difficulty, or consciously to want help. He weighs the exhortation, "Turn ye at my reproof." He says, My heart will not turn ; I love sin in defiance of every thing, wretch that I am ! He reads, "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you ;" he exclaims, Blessed hope ! and pleads the promise, by turning it into a prayer,—"Take away the stony heart out of my flesh, and give me a heart of flesh." Let these promises be viewed only in their true position, and the difficulty will vanish. They are a part of the system of means, intended to meet and to relieve the exercises of a reflecting mind ; and

to this purpose they are wisely and admirably adapted.

Our conclusion therefore remains, that when God promises the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, he assumes an attitude of rich grace, of illustrious mercy. We have only to add, that *the benignity of this dispensation is universal and equal.* We shall enter fully into the subject of election and discriminating grace in the following chapter, for which the reader's patience is requested but for a moment; all that we here state is, that *God will give his Holy Spirit to every one that asks it, without any discrimination at all.* Such is his promise respecting all the blessings he has encouraged us to pray for, and this cannot be an exception. "Every one that asketh receiveth." Imagine only a case so confoundingly strange as the contrary! Will it be said that any man, seeking the Spirit of God, will be refused and repelled? It is incredible. The promises are expressed in language of general import; they exclude none. Whatever discrimination God may exercise elsewhere, he uses none among the applicants at his throne of grace for the blessings of his salvation.

CHAP. II.

Of the ministration of the Spirit in his unsought agency.

We have already seen, that, while the blessed Spirit is promised to all men in answer to prayer, he is also sometimes sent into the heart *unsought*, to accomplish there the great work of his love and grace. The specific aspects of this ministration of the Spirit are now to be considered.

1. It is impossible not to observe immediately its *pre-eminent grace*. If it was kind to promise the Spirit when sought, it is much more so to impart his influence when it is not implored. In the former case, supplication expresses desire; but, in the latter, the attitude of enmity and opposition is still maintained. How passing strange is the fact, that the blessed Spirit, infinitely holy as he is, and burning for the divine glory, will enter such a breast, and wrest out of a sinner's hand the very weapon with which he is about both to defy his Maker, and to destroy his own soul! This is going immeasurably beyond all that justice requires, and is the utmost length of kindness to a guilty worm. God not only provides the blessedness, but gives the disposition to embrace it; herein giving what also he justly demands, and providing for the payment

of that to himself, which is righteously due to him from his creatures.

To this it must be added, that the gift of the Holy Spirit secures the attainment of the great and unspeakable blessings exhibited in the gospel. A sinner is then no longer left to trifle with salvation, and to reject the Saviour; but the hitherto prevailing enmity of his heart is overcome, and he is made willing in the day of divine power. He resists no more; but, led by the Spirit, humbly bows to the sceptre of redeeming mercy, and every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of faith. He thus becomes an actual partaker of salvation itself, and enters into the enjoyment of all its privileges; being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he has access into the grace wherein he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. v. 1, 2.) How pre-eminently gracious must the work be, which leads to such immeasurable and eternal blessedness! Without the influence of the Spirit, a sinner would be a wretch undone, even in the midst of mercies; with it, he becomes unutterably and for ever blest.

2. Unlike the former mode of administering the Spirit, however, this is *not universal but peculiar*. This is known by the fruits; since, wherever the Spirit is given, repentance and conversion are actually produced. From the very fact, therefore, even if there were no other evidence, from the very fact that only some persons are converted, the infe-

rence must necessarily be drawn, that only to some is the Spirit given. With this inevitable conclusion the declarations of holy writ fully agree; but it is important to show that the burden of its proof does not lie upon them. Those who dislike them, or their import, may conceive them to be blotted out of the book of God, if they please; we call upon them to read in another book the same lesson.—The fact is before their eyes, and cannot be obliterated; why should they find fault with the mere words which record it?

What can be the cause of this peculiarity?—Whence can it have originated? By what influence can the course of this celestial stream have been determined? Certainly by God himself, since no other being has power or opportunity to interpose in this matter. Of the Spirit he giveth to every man severally as it pleaseth him. But are there any known causes which may have guided his determination? Does he give the Spirit to one because he has made a proper improvement of other favours; because he has been considerate and prayerful; because he has been upright and moral: and does he withhold it from another because he has been the contrary? Or is it merely according to his will, and arbitrary pleasure?

To these inquiries it is obvious to answer, that God has certainly not acted without a reason, and a good one. No wise being does so, least of all He who is infinitely wise. The idea that he has distributed his Spirit, or any other blessing, accord-

ing to his *mere* will and pleasure, however sanctioned by one class of divines, or attacked by another, is not only unsupported by scripture, but directly opposed to it. Hear, for example, the words of our Lord. "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it *seemed good* in thy sight." (Matt. xi. 25, 26.) When we say that a person does any thing *merely because he will do it*, we mean that he had no regard to the character or tendency of the action itself but not such is the aspect of discriminating grace. What God has done he has well weighed, and has done it because "it *seemed good* in his sight."

The general nature of the reasons under which God has acted, are also to be ascertained with sufficient clearness. There is but one grand reason for which he does all things, and that is the glory of his own name. With a view to this end, doubtless he has decided, in every instance, the question of the communication of the Spirit. That we should be able in all cases to trace this tendency of his ways, it would be unreasonable to expect, with our limited capacity, and our present ignorance; but this affords us no just cause to doubt its reality. Upon a large scale some views of it are already apparent, and are opened to us by inspired authority. "Ye see your calling, brethren; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many

mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, *that no flesh should glory in his presence.*" (1 Cor. i. 26—29.)

One thing is certain, that, whatever the reasons may be which have actuated the Almighty in any particular case, *they have never been derived from the deserts or excellency of man himself.* To none has the Spirit been given because of his wisdom, or rank, or power, or humility, or virtue, or any excellency, natural or moral; and this principle has been adopted out of regard to the grand design that God may be glorified in all. Were it otherwise, some might have cause for glorying in his presence, which may not be, seeing it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 31.)

The unsought ministration of the Spirit, then, is discriminating and sovereign; a point in which God does not render to all alike, but severally to each, as it seemeth good in his sight. This simple and inevitable truth is to many persons a grand stumbling-block, and cause of complaint. God, then, it is said, makes a difference among men, and does not give us all the same facilities for salvation. But again we say, that the attack ought to be made, not against the doctrine, but against the fact. Suppose the doctrine buried in oblivion, the fact will

be irresistible, so long as you see some around you converted, and others in their sins. Whatever ground there may be of complaint, therefore, there can be no alteration.

But, after all, is there any foundation for complaint? The question to be decided is not, what has been God's conduct *to others*, but what has been his conduct *to me*. Has he done me any wrong? Has he withheld from me any means, or advantage, requisite to my having a fair and full opportunity of fleeing from the wrath to come? If he has, it is to be found in *the examination of my own circumstances, and not in comparing them with those of others*. Now in the closest inspection of God's dealings with himself, no sinner can find cause of complaint; on the contrary, he is treated, not only with justice, but with kindness; and if he fails of salvation, it will be only through a wilful and perverse neglect of his opportunites. It is true, his next neighbor is dealt with yet *more* kindly; but that makes, and can make, no difference to him: *his case* is what it is *in itself*, and so ever will remain.

The general view which we take of the unsought dispensation of the Spirit is, that it is characterized by *pre-eminent kindness* and *sovereign discrimination*. It may be pleasant, ere we close, to observe in what relation the ministration of the Spirit stands to the ways of God in their most general aspects, considered as consisting in, either the exercise of personal kindness, the ministration of moral government, or the conducting of an effectual agency.

CHAP. III

Of the ministration of the Spirit as connected with the work of Redemption generally:

It is, of course, with no other part of the divine ways than the work of redemption, that the ministration of the Spirit is connected. The whole office of this blessed agent, so far as man is concerned, is to remedy an existing mischief in his nature; and the assumption of such an office clearly implies, both that he is fallen from his original excellency, and that by divine mercy a restorative process is undertaken. The influence of the Spirit could not have been called for under any other circumstances; and the administration of it is a part of the method by which the redemption of men from sin and misery is accomplished.

It is not, however, the *first part* of this method. By transgression men are fallen into a state of guilt and condemnation, which not only forfeits all title to the favour of God, but actually shuts them out from the possibility of its communication, without some preparatory operation. The law requires to be fulfilled, and the righteousness of the lawgiver to be maintained, at the same time that mercy is extended to the criminal; an effectual provision for which must be made, before any ex-

ercise of mercy is actually entered upon. Hence we say, therefore, that the gift of his dear Son to die for sinners is prior, in the dispensations of God, to the gift of his Holy Spirit. The communication of the Spirit presupposes the death of Christ, without which no good thing could ever have been conferred on the guilty; it is indeed the fruit of his dying pains, and is poured out to the honour of his love, and for the glory of his name.

But this is not all. It might be asked, Why, although Christ had died, should the Holy Spirit be imparted? Was not the way of salvation fully opened by the blood-shedding of the Son of God? Undoubtedly it was; and if men would have availed themselves of it without an extrinsic influence, there would have been no occasion for the operation of the eternal Spirit. The introduction of this glorious agent proceeds upon the supposition, that, although the way of salvation is open, the determination of man's heart is so fixed in sin tha he will not avail himself of it, even when favoured with the amplest opportunities, and addressed by the most powerful motives. Such, on God's authority, the fact is declared to be; and it is to meet this feature of the case, that the ministration of the Spirit is superadded to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to induce sinners to receive him, to cause his enemies to submit themselves, and to bring them, in this method, to the actual possession of redemption.

Now it is manifest, that one grand and important

feature of this administration relates to *the final issue of the work of redemption itself*. Without it, although a vast provision had been made for the salvation of sinners, not a single sinner would be saved; and, in this respect, a character of fruitlessness and disappointment would be given to this great undertaking, which could be neither gratifying to the benevolence of the Most High, nor conducive to his glory. To prevent so undesirable a result, and to secure a large and sufficient measure of success in the actual salvation of men, the divine Spirit is sent forth, with his almighty energy, to work effectually in their hearts, to vanquish their enmity, and bring them to the Saviour, that he may see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

Another principal aspect of the ministration of the Spirit has relation to *the happiness of man*.—When God determined to give his Spirit in answer to prayer, or more especially, to send him unsought into the breasts of particular persons whom he foreknew, while it was for his own glory, it was also for their good. It was because he loved them with an everlasting love, that he thus purposed to draw them with loving-kindness. It is a pre-eminent illustration of his *personal kindness* towards the objects he had in view.

It is to be observed, however, that the ministration of the Spirit is kept *altogether separate from the moral government* of God. He requires obedience, he denounces threatenings against sin, he will judge and punish the ungodly, quite irrespectively

of the influence of the Spirit; as it is manifest he must, since he does, and will do, all this to multitudes of persons to whom the Spirit is not given. Now the moral government of God consists in the method of dealing with men by means of commands and motives, in the prospect of a final retribution; and since this comprehends many to whom the Spirit is not given, it is plain that the moral government of God is carried on altogether irrespectively of the ministration of the Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit is a dispensation of *eminent personal kindness*, and of *glorious effectual power*.—It becomes Him so to work, who can accomplish all things according to the counsel of his own will.—It is honourable for him thus to secure to his Son the joy set before him, and to defeat the awful malignity of a rebellious world. It is an attitude in which, with manifest justice, he claims to himself all the glory of a sinner's salvation. It was his love which provided a Saviour, whom yet every sinner would have rejected, without his overcoming grace. In this, therefore, as in his other works, God himself is all in all. To him alone, and in every respect, is to be ascribed, that a single sinner has been rescued from hell and brought to heaven; and to Him alone will the glory be rendered, while saints are happy, or immortality endures.—Amen, and Amen.

PRACTICAL ADDRESSES

TO A SINNER,

ON THE PRINCIPLES MAINTAINED IN THE FOREGOING TREATISE.

THE design of these Practical Addresses is threefold. It is, first, to exhibit the principles which the author has been advocating, in a form less argumentative, and wholly apart from controversy.—When a sentiment is much discussed, there is danger of its being supposed to be fit for nothing else; and persons who do not like controversy, or may not be apt at argument, may put it aside as possessing no interest for them. Such an impression, it is hoped, the following pages may obviate or correct, and convince the reader, that the principle which has been vindicated is capable also of being applied.

The author wishes, secondly, to bring his principles to a new and additional test. If they are of any value that value lies in their just and forcible application to the conscience of a sinner. The question, therefore, is a fair one; How would you converse with a sinner on these principles? This question he has thus endeavoured to answer; whether

satisfactorily to his readers they of course will judge; but, if it was not satisfactorily to himself, he would immediately suspect and review his principles.

But above all, the author has been desirous of closing his book with these addresses, because, on so deeply important a subject as religion, he could not bear to write a volume of mere controversy.—His readers, like himself, are sinners hastening to judgment and eternity; and he earnestly requests that they will do him the favour to read the following pages as addressed personally to themselves.—Though he may never see them on earth, we shall see each other at the bar of God; and fain would he have every reader pour a blessing on him there! It *will* be either a blessing or a curse.

A brief observation may be necessary, respecting the manner in which these addresses are framed.—They will, of course be found to contain assertion, and not argument, as from the nature of the case is inevitable; but an attentive reader will find no difficulty in referring to the pages, in the preceding part of the work, where the several points have been argued at length. The author has, throughout, avoided the use of the word *power*, the double meaning of which almost inevitably introduces perplexity into the plainest statements. Instead of this term, he has used a just and exact equivalent; he has spoken of having *the means* of doing any thing, which is the precise definition of power.—He begs to add, finally, that these addresses are not to be regarded as comprehending *all* he would say

to a sinner in the circumstances supposed, but only so much as may be connected with, or illustrative of, the sentiments which have been under consideration; and as presenting, even in this view, rather a skeleton than a complete body, the principles upon which the author would frame his appeal, rather than the motives by which he would enforce it.

I.

DEAR READER,

I may not address you as an innocent, but as a *sinful* man. It is not that I have pleasure in regarding you as such, but the word of God declares us all to be so; and his word is truth. I am willing, however, to converse with you on this subject rationally and coolly; I earnestly wish you, indeed, to inquire into the grounds on which you are charged with guilt. By all means clear or defend yourself if you can.

The general accusation brought against you by your Maker, is, that you have not loved him with all your heart. Into the proof of this allegation I suppose it is not necessary to enter; you are probably too well convinced of its truth, to dispute it for a moment.

I may imagine, however, that while you admit the fact, that you have not thus loved God, you dispute its *criminality*. Why, you ask, am I therefore condemned *as a sinner?* The question is highly reasonable, and extremely important; I readily confess that it behoves one who brings the

charge of sin against you, to be able to establish it by clear and conclusive proofs; and I will endeavour to meet your demand, as honestly as I hope you have put it.

1. That for which God censures you is, *not having loved him*; or, in other words, he blames you for *not having possessed a particular state of mind.* This, therefore, is the first point upon which your inquiry bears. *Upon what ground of justice does God require you to possess any particular state of mind at all?* There are creatures around you, I mean those of the brute creation, whose *allowed* occupation is nothing more than the gratification of their appetites, and the following of their several impulses. But this, it seems, is not the case *with you.* God *requires* of you something peculiar and specific. He is not satisfied that you should merely eat and drink, and act out the varied passions which may arise within you; but he prescribes a particular course, and demands this at your hands. Why should this be? *Because the constitution of your nature qualifies you to fulfil the demand.* You are *not* a mere machine, the sport of circumstances, the victim of fate, or the helpless slave of your passions. To a certain extent, which we shall define presently, *you have the means of attaining whatever state of mind you please.*

It is your nature to love or to hate, to rejoice or to be sorry, as you find inducements to do so. You have also the means of judging of the various inducements which may be presented to you in every

case, in order to estimate their proper force, and to determine how far you will yield to them, or resist. To qualify you for this exercise of judgment, God has given you a perception of good and evil, a sense of right and wrong, by which the character of all inducements may be ascertained, and your course respecting them decided accordingly. When you perceive any to be either right or wrong, you have the means also of establishing or preventing their influence, both by the superior force of the sense of duty itself, and by turning your attention to such considerations as may be adapted to give success to your efforts. Now since this is the case, and you may, by attention, bring your mind to any state you please, then it is manifestly not unjust that God should require your mind to be in some specific condition.

It is plain, as we have said, indeed, that this capacity of being what you please is not unbounded. It is limited by two considerations; the one is the just force of the inducements presented to you, and the other your capacity of apprehending them. As the state of your mind is to be regulated by consideration, it follows, of course, that the regulation of it can go no further than the due force of the topics set before you for this end, nor than your power of perceiving that force. *If God should have required of you any thing beyond these limits*, I will make no attempt to maintain its justice; but if, on the contrary, the commands of your Maker are confined to the extent within which you are able to be what

you please, and in all cases accompanied with inducements suitable and sufficient in themselves, and well adapted to your apprehension, then upon what ground can their justice be impugned?

2. Let us pass on, then, from the fact of such requirement, the justice of which we will take to be admitted, to the tenor of the requirement itself:—*What is it that your Maker requires of you?*

Receive this information from the lips of our divine Lord, Luke x. 27: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

Such is the law of God, given to man, and to every man, as the rule and measure of his demand. You may observe, that it intimates *the existence of strength* to be what it commands: otherwise, what meaning could there be in the language itself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength," if we had no strength for this purpose? You should observe also, very particularly, that *the employment of our strength in the way prescribed, is the whole scope of the law.* It specifies nothing in reference to the quantity of strength which we may or may not have; but, taking this at whatever it may actually be, it makes our actual strength the precise limit of its demands. *With all our strength* we are to love God, but no further. You will mark, therefore, how accurately the requirements of your Maker observe the limitation which justice demands; they extend no further than the

space within which you are able to be what you please.

3. It still remains to ascertain *whether the requirements of God are accompanied by suitable and sufficient inducements.*

Here let us recollect, that all which God requires of us is *to love him*, the outward obedience he prescribes being no other than the fruit of love. Has he, therefore, presented to us suitable and sufficient inducements to love him? The question surely needs no answer. *He is the Lord our God;* and out of this fact alone inducements of unquestionable sufficiency arise. He is God *our Maker*, the author of our being, with all its powers; and what obligation is more strong than this, that the parent should be treated with affectionate kindness by his offspring? He is *the Lord* our Maker; a being of infinite superiority, excellency, and majesty, in comparison with whom we are less than nothing and vanity, and with whose glory our whole hearts should be identified. Can other or stronger inducements be needful, ere we have cause enough to love him.

4. The last question to be asked is, *whether these inducements to love God are set before us in a way suited to our apprehension?* I imagine you can entertain little doubt upon this point. It is impossible to conceive either sentiment or language more plain or simple. It is only that children ought to love their parents; a truth which we perceive with the utmost clearness, and the force of which we feel

instantaneously, not merely because of its evidence, but because it is intimately interwoven with our own relations. No sentiment could be better adapted to our apprehension than this.

Let us now recall what has been said. God requires you to possess a specific disposition. You are able to attain specific dispositions, so far as suitable and sufficient inducements are intelligibly set before you. Suitable and sufficient inducements *are* thus set before you, in reference to that particular disposition which God requires you to cherish, namely love to himself. *You are therefore justly required to love God; and if so, in not having loved him you have been guilty of sin.* Let me exhibit this to you in another light.

Understand, then, that your power over your own mind lies entirely in your capacity of attention and consideration. The state of your mind always corresponds with the things you think of; and when you wish it to be in any particular state, if there are any intelligible topics suited and sufficient to induce the state desired, think duly of them, and it will be done. This is the constitution of your mind: it cannot act otherwise, and in this method it will act invariably. In order to love God, therefore, what had you to do? Obviously *to think of him.* Reflecting upon the fact that he is the author of your being, and of all your powers; dwelling upon his boundless glory and excellency in this relation to you; doing this with all the helps to be derived from his works and from his word;

and persisting in it, until these topics had been adequately apprehended by your understanding, and had exerted their just influence upon your feelings; *doing this, you would have loved him.* Failing in this, you cannot reasonably have expected to love him; you do not love any other object, neither can you love any, but in proportion as you perceive its inducements to love, and dwell upon them; nor in any other case does dwelling on such inducements fail proportionately to inspire love—why should it in this?

If you had made the experiment, and found it unsuccessful; if, after due reflection upon what you perceived to be just and sufficient causes for love to God, you had not loved him, something must have disturbed the rational structure of your mind. You would have been no longer sane. The very constitution on which the Divine Being grounded his requirements, that, namely, *by which the state of the heart was always to answer to the topics entertained by the understanding*, would have ceased to exist; and with it would have ceased the obligation of those requirements themselves. But if you did not make the effort; if the great facts adapted to excite your love towards God were presented to your mind, and disregarded; if you suffered them to slip from your recollection, or even purposely banished them from your thoughts; then, of course, you have not loved God, but, *for not loving him, you are guilty*, and God rightly holds you so. It may now be said to you, Why did you

refuse consideration to these things? You knew they were right and important, much more important than the other matters to which you surrendered your thoughts: yet you did surrender your thoughts to other things, and to things which have not only left you without love to God, but have induced an habitual and confirmed aversion to him. Your own judgment condemns you; and God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things, how shall not he condemn you? Acknowledge, therefore, that you are justly reckoned a sinner; that your mouth is stopped from every excuse, and that you have only to plead guilty before God.

II.

I have already endeavoured to show you, dear reader, that, for not having loved God, you are justly chargeable with sin. I must now set before you another painful but certain truth; namely, that *for sin God will bring you into judgment.* Your conduct he not only considers to be *wrong*, but he holds you *answerable* for it. He has suspended upon it consequences of the deepest interest. If you had loved him with all your heart, you would have found in his friendship unspeakable and perpetual blessedness; and seeing that you have not done so, wrath is revealed against you from heaven. A day of retribution is already announced, when he will say, "As for this thine enemy, who would not that I should reign over him, cast him into outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The aspect of these things is in the utmost degree solemn and awful; and you are perfectly justifiable in inquiring into the reasonableness of such an administration. You will perhaps propose some such question as this: But, allowing it to be just that I should love God, *what right has he to make this demand of me, and to call me to an account for my conduct?*

His right to do so springs out of the one great fact, that *he is your Creator.* As the author of your being, the arrangement of every thing relating to your condition lay in his own bosom: and he has a right to require from his creatures whatever return agrees with their capacity and their circumstances. Wherever any thing is given, there something may be required; and much or little, according to that which has been bestowed. Being a creature of God, therefore, you are *in fact* under a rightful obligation to love him, from which, dislike it as you may, you can never escape. The only questions for you to ask on this subject are, Whether the return which God requires be not greater than the means bestowed; and whether the punishment he denounces be not greater than the criminality incurred. Let us examine them.

1. I conceive you to ask, first, *whether the return that God requires from you is not greater than the means he has bestowed;* whether he is not gathering where he has not strawed.

What God requires is that we should *love him with all our hearts.* We ask, then, *whether he has,*

or has not, given us the means of doing this. In order to an answer we must push the question back, and inquire, *wherein the means of doing it consists.* Now the means of loving God with all our hearts consist, first, in having a heart so constituted, as duly and certainly to feel such inducements to love as may be presented to the understanding; and secondly, in having intelligibly presented to the understanding suitable and sufficient inducements to love God supremely. These things being so, then we have the means of loving God with all our hearts, for, *in such circumstances, it requires only consideration to produce this result.* But these are in fact the constitution and circumstances of man; whence it follows, that man has the means of loving God with all his heart. And if this be the case, when God requires man to love him with all his heart, he does not require more than he has given him means to fulfil, nor therefore an unreasonable return for what he has bestowed. He gathers *what he has strawed, and no more.* He has found the talents, and expected nothing from us but to use them *according to our several ability.*

2. In relation to the system of responsibility, I conceive you to ask, secondly, *whether the punishment denounced be not greater than the criminality incurred.* Not to have loved God appears to you an unimportant fault.

Let me here request you in the outset, not to be misled by the awful metaphorical terms so frequently employed to describe the divine anger. Their

force is to show, doubtless, that God's disapprobation is a *very dreadful* thing; but still it is *only God's disapprobation* that they are brought to illustrate. Divested of metaphor, the simple statement is, that, if you have not loved him as required, he will both disapprove your conduct itself, and express his disapprobation towards you in such a way as will make you directly sensible of it. The severe suffering which this will occasion will arise, not from any violence on his part, but only from the glory of God himself, and the intimate connexion there is between his approbation and the final happiness of every intelligent creature.

The question properly before us, therefore, is *whether the disapprobation of God be a disproportionate recompense for not having loved him supremely.* This is just like asking whether our not loving God supremely is *any fault at all;* for if it be, it would seem that disapprobation must justly follow it, on the common principle of disapproving whatever is wrong. This is a case, moreover, in which criminality is very manifest. For God has given us the means of loving him supremely; and if we had not neglected the sense of right which prompted us to it, and refused the consideration by which it would have been produced, we should certainly have realized the fulfilment of his will. *Do this refusal and resistance constitute no fault, and deserve no blame?* Then nothing can do so; the very words should be obliterated from the language of men, and disapprobation in any and every respect

forever banished from the world. Were any servant to fail of his duty to us on the same ground, we should reprove him with just severity; nor will our Maker and our Judge be unjust, when, for such returns, he shall enter into judgment with us.

Mark well, dear reader, the conclusion to which we are come. You would fain not give an account of yourself to God; but you have seen that he holds you to it by a bond which you admit to be equitable. Nor can you lower in the least degree the standard of his demand; since you have allowed the reasonableness and obligation of loving him with all your heart. Neither can you complain of the unrighteousness of his condemnation; since you have seen, that, if you have not loved him, his disapprobation will be richly deserved.

Is it not time for you to consider, therefore, *what this condemnation is?* Know you not that God's disapprobation is set forth by figures of fearful import, and language indicating it to be the source of intense and unutterable suffering? Is not judgment at hand? Will its doom admit of any reversion? Is not your state as a sinner dreadful, and powerfully adapted to awaken your anxiety? Will you not cry, are you not even now crying, What must I do to be saved? O to escape from the wrath to come!

III.

O Sinner, guilty and condemned! God, who is rich in mercy, is not unmindful of your misery.

He knew it long before it was discovered by yourself, and of his own infinite kindness has provided a remedy. He hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—This is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; for the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. Though he knew no sin, yet was he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As he died for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification; and seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us, he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. His invitations are most ample and encouraging. Hear his call: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; for him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

This is for you good tidings of great joy. Every thing needful to your salvation is complete, and salvation itself is fully prepared for your possession, the gift of free and sovereign grace. You are called upon to make no atonement, to shed no blood, to offer no expiation; this is all superseded by the shedding of the blood of Christ. In order to have the benefit of his interposition, you are but to come to Christ, or to God through him. You are but to repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for upon repentance your sins shall be blotted out, and whosoever believeth shall be saved. But *you must*

do this; for except we repent we shall all likewise perish, and he that believeth not shall yet be condemned.

Nor is this a matter of mere necessity in order to your escape from ruin, it is enjoined upon you as itself a duty; your failing in which will be regarded by God as directly criminal, and more deeply so than your primary violation of his law. Your not embracing the Redeemer, he holds to be a greater sin than your not having loved your Creator. This is the grand manifestation of character to which he now looks; it is the chief matter which he will bring into judgment; and if you should be finally condemned, it will be pre-eminently *because you have not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God.*

You perceive, therefore, dear reader, that you are still indispensably *called into action.* Something is prescribed to you, which you must possess, or you are undone. Your future and eternal condition actually turns upon this point. This is a state of things which may reasonably engage your severe inquiry. Its aspect on one hand is that of most animating hope—*you may be saved;* but it wears on the other an appearance of hard necessity—*you must repent.*

1. *What is it that is thus required of you?*

I need not at present enter further into this question than to say, that it is *a state of mind.* The phrases *coming to Christ*, *repenting*, *believing*, and whatever others may be used in the same reference,

strictly and uniformly import *a state of mind*, and nothing more. Now this is well worthy of your observation. This was what the law of God required of you in the first instance; and it is what the gospel, with all its riches of grace, requires of you in the second: the two methods of divine proceeding you perceive to be framed on one and the same principle, namely, *the perfect equity of requiring you to possess a specific state of mind.*

2. But *where is the equity of your being thus left, and of salvation being poised on the single circumstance of your attaining a prescribed state of mind?*

Observe, then, that *you have still the means of attaining to any state of mind, to which suitable and sufficient inducements are set before you.* The means of doing this consist solely in the faculty of consideration, with a heart that answers to it; both of which you have, *if you are of sound mind;* there is nothing inequitable, therefore, in suspending your salvation on the attainment of any state of mind, if suitable and sufficient inducements to it are exhibited. We must go on to ask, then, in the next place, *whether any motives are presented to you, suited and sufficient to induce you to repent.*

3. The answer to this question is easy, but it can scarcely be brief. The topics adduced in the divine word to bring you ro repentance comprehend all that is convincing in descriptions of your guilt, or touching in the character and aspect of your Maker, in the prospect of eternity, in the solemnities of judgment, and most especially in the interposi-

tion of divine mercy, in the person and by the blood of the Son of God. Yet I need not surely enlarge on these themes; for, if you should, unhappily, *not* repent, whatever may be the cause of it, I cannot suppose you will ever say that *you did not know reasons enough why you should have repented.*

Let us return, therefore. For, *if you have the means of attaining to any state of mind to which suitable and sufficient inducements are set before you: and if there are set before you suitable and sufficient inducements to the prescribed state of mind on which salvation depends, then you have the means of attaining that state of mind, and, with it, salvation itself.* You are, consequently most equitably treated. Salvation is put into your hands; and if you loose it, it will be your own fault; it will be because you have not done that which you have the means of doing. It is quite time, then, that you should arouse yourself to action, lest, while you sleep, your destruction come. You cannot sleep, and be safe.

4. I may perhaps imagine your next question to be this: *But, how am I to attain a different state of mind from that in which I am?* A very important inquiry, truly, and one most readily answered.—You are to produce what effects you please on the state of your own mind, *by the consideration of topics adapted to your design;* such topics being sure to act according to their nature, if duly weighed, and being also sure to accomplish the object, if in themselves sufficient for that purpose. We have already seen, that the truths exhibited as induce-

ments to the state of mind with which salvation is connected, *are* sufficient for that purpose: if therefore, you wish to attain that state of mind, give due attention to them, and they will not fail of their effect. It is precisely for this effort of attention that God himself calls upon you. "O that they were wise," says he, "and would *consider* these things!" Hence also the numberless instances in which he requires men to *hearken* to him, which is accurately expressive of *attentive hearing:* "*Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.*" This, in truth, may be regarded as the primary thing which God demands of you, since he himself has so arranged other points, that, if you do this, every thing else will certainly follow, which may fulfil his commands and secure your own welfare.

5. Here you may perhaps wish to know more particularly what the state of mind, connected with salvation is. I have called it, in scripture language, coming to Christ, repentance, and faith; it is also called in the sacred word, being reconciled to God. All these convey the same general idea of a total change of your feelings on religious subjects, especially manifested by a submissive acquiescence in the way of salvation by the death and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The truths which are adapted and sufficient to effect this change, are contained in God's holy word; and the consideration of them which will infallibly lead to this result, is nothing more than an honest, teachable, and persevering one, such as you very well know the

case to deserve. It does not, indeed, need more than a single moment's realizing view to decide your feelings; but certainly you will not have fulfilled one half of your duty in this respect, before your heart will be broken with penitence, and inflamed with love.

I will now only ask you, *whether this is more than your soul is worth?* Whether, if you perish through the refusal of such a method, you will not be chargeable with your own ruin, and give yourself cause for bitter and unanswerable reproaches? Shall I now leave you to enter your chamber, and look full in the face those heart-stirring things which are arrayed for your contemplation? The Lord meet with you there?

IV.

Perhaps you will assure me, dear reader, that you have often thought of these things, and have often prayed too, and have not found any beneficial effect. I am not willing to suspect you of an attempt to deceive *me*, but I fear you are deceiving *yourself*.—First, as to your *prayers*. Have not many, have not all of them, been characterized by *formality?* You may have been upon your knees; but *did you express any real desire* before God? You may recollect many instances in which you know you did not; but when, on the contrary, whatever words may have passed from your lips, your heart was quite vacant of any such desire. Or if you think

you have at any time expressed real desire before God, *what have you desired*? Perhaps pardon, deliverance from hell, or some similar blessing; but you have desired them *apart from repentance and reconciliation to God.* The first object of prayer is *a new*, that is, a holy *heart*, which is indispensable to salvation: *Did you ever desire this*? Was it ever your sincere supplication that God would break the yoke of your unholy passions, and cleanse your heart from the love of sin? You may easily be convinced, I think, that this never was your desire; neither is it so now. You have never, therefore, put up a prayer that God could listen to for a moment. He has never seen you at his throne but as a rebel, cherishing your enmity to him, while you would fain cover yourself from his deserted indignation. Is it such prayers that satisfy you? Or is it *you* who complain that you have not a holy heart, you who have never desired it?

Next, to your assertion, that *you have often thought of religious subjects without benefit.*

1. It is *only a few of them*, I suspect, that have engaged your attention. Are there not many aspects of divine things, to which you must acknowledge you have never given any consideration at all? Have you even, at any time, taken the pains to inquire, whether there were not some other serious and important truths, adapted to affect the heart? Most certainly you have not. Your conscience has laid hold upon some few of the truths of religion which happened to come in its way, and so you

have given *them* a thought; but a far greater number of the topics fitted to convert the heart, are yet to you as things unknown. Look carefully into the word of God, and see if it be not so: and can you expect so partial and inaccurate a view of truth to produce the effect which you profess to desire?

2. I may probably say, too, that your attention has not been fixed upon the topics *most eminently adapted to affect your heart.* Perhaps some conviction of outward sin, rather than a view of inward corruption; perhaps a thought of the wrath to come, without a touching recollection of Him that is willing to save; perhaps a cherished idea that the vilest sinner may be saved, apart from the remembrance that the wicked must forsake his way. How can such mutilated thoughts as these produce the effect you profess to have desired? They much more probably minister, by an easy perversion to your tranquil continuance in sin.

3. To this it may be added, that, to the topics which have entered your mind, you have given *a very slender and inadequate attention.* You have often thought of these things, you say, *How often?* Have you thought of them every day with the morning light, and the evening shade; and has the savour of them been spread through your busy hours? The very question startles and confounds you. By *often* thinking of religion, you mean that you have thought of it *occasionally*, once in a few months, or a few weeks, or a few days, which is often enough *for you.* And when you do think of

serious things, *how do you think of them?* Do you set apart a portion of time to entertain them, with the advantage of retirement, and a mind withdrawn, as far as may be, from worldly vanities and cares? Do you then take from God's own word the representations of eternal things, and endeavour to bring them home to your heart with their utmost power? Have you repeated this exercise every day, through any considerable length of time?—I know you cannot answer me these questions. You have done nothing like this. Your thoughts of religion have been only such as have floated across your mind amidst worldly concerns, never welcomed, and seldom entertained for a moment; thoughts which you have been more pleased to forget, than ready to recal. Or, if ever you have gone into solitude to pursue such reflections, it has been but occasionally, and you have yielded speedily to the feelings of indifference or worldly love, which solicited your abandonment of so unwelcome an employ. And did you ever expect, that *such thoughts* of religion would be influential? If they were, religion must be very unlike to every thing else; for, on no other subjects would such thoughts lead to any beneficial result. *Nor did you ever believe that you were giving to religious subjects the consideration they deserved.* It is highly probable, that you never even asked yourself whether you were paying them a due regard or not; and certainly, whenever you might have done so, your own conscience would have told you that you were not. And yet, though

you cannot make any pretensions to having paid such a regard to religious subjects as you know they deserved, you complain that you have thought of them without effect!

4. I may charge you with yet a further fault: *You have shown no willingness to yield to the force of such thoughts as may have been brought to your mind.* When you have been convinced of sin, you have not taken up that conviction thus:—'Now I see that this is wrong; I ought to be sorry for it, and loathe it, and humble myself before God on account of it.' When a thought of eternity has entered your mind, you have made no attempt to apply it, as by saying 'O, my soul, think of this! I am soon to be either in heaven or hell: and what manner of person ought I to be!' The same might be said of every other truth. You have not tried, you have not wished, that they should influence you; but have felt rather glad to evade their influence by forgetfulness, if not to destroy it by inviting thoughts of a contrary tendency. And can you wonder that *your* thoughts of religion have been powerless?

5. I will direct your attention to one circumstance more, which will show you that the truths of religion are in fact powerful, *to the full extent to which they are considered.* You have never *entertained* a thought of religion for a moment, which did not produce *some* effect. Whenever you *have* thought about it under whatever aspect, you have found that it had a tendency to make you se-

rious, and even anxious; and if you have at any time thought of it more closely, or for a longer period, you have found this tendency more strong.—What is this, but a decisive testimony to the power of religious truths over the heart, *as far as consideration is given to them?* Suppose you had carried the consideration of them further? Their influence, of course, would have been greater. Suppose you had given them the full consideration you knew them to deserve? Their influence would have been greater still; nay, *it would have been decisive and effectual.* There is no reason why they have not induced you to repent, but because you have treated them with consciously unmerited neglect.

Remember, therefore, dear reader, that this excuse also is taken away from you. If you repent, it must arise from reflection; it can arise from no other means, and it will infallibly arise from this. The question is, Will you, or will you not attend to God's call? If you will not, his indignation will justly follow your rebellious obstinacy. If you will, enter into your closet, and consider duly the objects adapted to prevail with you; and again, I say, The Lord meet with you there!

V.

Well, my friend, have you been into your closet? I will conceive you dear reader, to say that you have, and that you are still prepared to complain of not finding the advantages I led you to expect. Have

you, then, duly reflected on the solemn truths relating to your eternal welfare? You cannot, probably, say that you have. You have been alone, but your thoughts have been drawn aside by other objects, and you have not fixed them on divine things for even a few moments. Allow me then to observe, that *it is no wonder the state of your mind has undergone no change.* This was to result from due consideration, and from that alone; but you have given no due consideration to serious things, and for this reason they have produced no effect. I may still maintain, therefore, that *due* consideration will he effectual, and might again press it upon you.—But if I were to urge you to return to your chamber, you would perhaps say, It is useless. I *cannot* reflect. Let me know, however, what you mean when you say, you cannot reflect. You do not mean that the exercise of reflection or consideration *itself* is impracticable to you? You can still reflect on matters of worldly business, or give attention to the affairs of life; only you cannot attend to the *concerns of religion.* I understand you then; and it is important that you should understand yourself. The consideration of religious subjects is so unwelcome to you, that your heart shrinks from it; your feelings have so much levity and worldliness in them, that they drive away all serious thoughts. Do you call this not being *able* to reflect? It is surely not being *willing* to reflect, or rather, being determined that you will not. What are those light and wicked feelings of yours, that they are to

banish matters of the utmost moment from your regard, and even to prevent your thinking of them? Or what are you, but a foolish and a wicked man, to suffer them to do so? Would you permit similar causes to draw you from an examination of your worldly affairs? Why then from an inquiry into the state of your soul?

You are, however, learning by experience one thing, which, though you may have often heard it you never knew or believed, probably, till now; you are learning *the plague of your own heart.* Must it not be an evil heart, which is so reluctant to *look* even at the things of another world, which refuses to be brought at all into contact with them, and pertinaciously baffles every effort at consideration, by its cherished worldliness and levity? See also to what awful consequences it leads. You are thus induced to trifle with your own soul and your most important interests, to reject your Saviour, and to defy your Judge. You waste time, you forget eternity, and you leave death, judgment, and hell, to come at their leisure, and overwhelm you with unutterable terrors. Are you not amazed at your own image? Resolute trifler that you are, what will become of you? Whither will this wicked heart conduct you, but to everlasting sorrow?

You must not, however, imagine for a moment that this reluctance which baffles you, affords any justification, or even any excuse, for your inconsideration and neglect. What is itself wicked can furnish no excuse for other wickedness. Your heart

is evil, but see to it; for it should be good, and God commands you to make it so. "Make a new heart, and a new spirit," says he; Ezek. xviii. 31; and again, "Wash thine heart from wickedness," Jer. iv. 14. This command, you perceive proceeds upon the principle already stated, that, when sufficient inducements to any state of mind are presented to us, that state of mind may be justly required at our hands, because consideration will infallibly produce it. For the correction of your evil heart, therefore, you are still thrown back on the necessity and the sufficiency of consideration.

Yet I would dissuade you from *putting on a new resolution*, and saying, it shall be so no more; you will be more thoughtful. Happy should I be to think this would be the case; but there are those who know more of your heart than as yet you know yourself. It is not worth while to resolve what, in a few moments, or in a few hours at most, will be undone. The great God, who alone knows the heart through all its windings and depths, has assured us that it is desperately wicked, that there is *no hope* of its ever resigning its love for the world and its enmity to God, without other aid. Men flatter themselves often and long that it will; but in this, as in all other respects, God is wiser than men, and experience proves him right. The fixedness of your determination in the love of sin, under whatever disguise it may be concealed, is so great that the scripture affirms your conversion to be as hopeless as the washing of the Ethiopian, or the raising

of the dead. If you wish to be baffled and undone, therefore, continue to deal with yourself as inefficiently as hitherto; but if you have any desire to escape from the wrath to come, *fall instantly on your knees before God, and implore his quickening and renewing grace, the grace of his Holy Spirit.* This is his special remedy for the reigning wickedness of your heart, and it is graciously promised. He will pour out his Spirit unto you; he will give you a new heart, and put within you a right spirit; the stony heart will he take away out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. All will be well then, but not till then: and short of that, nothing should satisfy you.

Remember, however, *what you are to pray for.*— You are to pray, *not for salvation, but for the state of mind with which salvation is connected;* that is, for a change of heart. Do not imagine that *prayer will save you,* or that *having prayed you have done your duty, and may leave the rest to God. Your direct, immediate, and indispensable duty is to repent,* from the obligation and necessity of which prayer by no means relieves you: on the contrary, you come to pray, because your heart is so wicked it will not repent, and to ask God to give you repentance. As a wicked heart drives you to prayer, so prayer should lead you afresh to grapple with a wicked heart, by more vigorous exercises of reflection and meditation upon the all-important subjects to which, if to any thing, it must ultimately yield.

Remember, too, what an unspeakable mercy it is that your way to the throne of grace is yet open; that a condescending Saviour will yet receive you, that, after all your unwillingness and unworthiness, he will not cast you out; but rather invites and welcomes you *as you are*, to the fountain of his blood and the blessings of his salvation.

Am I to entertain a doubt whether you will follow my counsel? Do you hesitate to admit that your heart is madly and diabolically evil as I have here represented it? Must you try a little more in your own strength? Let *experience* then teach you if you live to learn its bitter lessons; but *let* experience teach you, and do not maintain a high opinion of your good intentions, in defiance of perpetuated folly and sin! Neither let it be forgotten how short a time you may have to try the experiment, and how soon he that hardeneth his neck may be destroyed without remedy. Remember that this is *your last hope*, and that turning a deaf ear to this gracious invitation, you abandon yourself entirely to your wickedness, and its dreadful results. Yet *understand why and how it is that you perish*. It is not because you do not *pray*, but because you do not attain a particular state of mind, which *you have the means of attaining*, inasmuch as the truths set before you, being duly considered, will infallibly produce it. Do not endeavour, therefore, to shift the mischief or the guilt to any other quarter.—They lie wholly with yourself. Your perdition is as much your own act, and you have as truly the

means of preventing it, as if you had this moment a dagger in your hand, and I were speaking of your plunging it into your bosom. Will not all heaven weep, and all hell wonder, at the cool and dreadful obduracy with which you can perpetrate the deed of eternal sorrow?

VI.

May I hope that I meet you now, my dear reader, with great pleasure? I trust you have now been into solitude, *to seek the Lord*. You have implored at his hands the removal of your desperate levity, and have especially sought the influence of his blessed Spirit to open your heart, that you may attend to the things which concern your eternal peace. Has the Lord heard the voice of your cry?

If you hesitate a moment in giving me an answer to this question, it is not because you feel that you must answer it in the negative, but only because you cannot yet say *all* that you desire. Your waiting upon God has not been altogether in vain. You begin to see something which hitherto you have not seen. There are strange heavings within your bosom; though as yet, perhaps, you seem only to learn your own ignorance and hardness of heart, and to be more blind and obdurate than ever, so that your condition appears to you to be awful indeed. Or perhaps you can say that the Lord has softened your heart, and enlarged it in prayer; leading you as a lost and helpless sinner to the Saviour's footstool, and inspiring you with hope, if not with joy and peace, in believing.

Whatever the peculiarities of your case may be (and there are endless diversities in the operations of the same Spirit,) I doubt not you will acknowledge that *you are indebted to the blessed Spirit for every measure of beneficial change.* It has been wrought in opposition to yourself, and in the face of long prevalent feelings, which have been broken down and brought into captivity to Christ by a power consciously not your own. Long did you resist, and still would have resisted, had not a gracious friend disarmed you, and laid you low at his feet.—If you are now willing instead of unwilling, it is because he has made you so, in the day of his power.

To whom, therefore, have you to ascribe the glory? Manifestly *to him who has wrought the change.* It might have been to yourself, if you had shewn any disposition towards it, or if you had of your own accord made use of the means in your possession; but seing that, with the means in your hands you neglected the great salvation, and turned from him that called you, what can ever belong to you but shame and confusion of face? All the praise is due to the God of your salvation. You are a monument of his mercy, a trophy of his victorious grace; and, while time or immortality endures, you will have to say, 'Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name be glory, for thy mercy's sake!'

While self-gratulation is thus destroyed, it is important you should learn also *the greatness of your*

obligations. You should neither overlook nor forget, what and how much grace hath done for you. It was much that Christ should die for you, and that a way should thus be opened for your reconciliation to God; but was it not hard, too, that you would not be reconciled? You wilfully cherished and perpetuated a state of enmity towards God!—What might he not have done with you? But *what did he do?* Instead of leaving you to your obstinacy, he sent his own Spirit into your heart, to weary you of your evil ways, and constrain you to seek his face. He himself opened the heart which you locked against him; and the blessedness which he has shed abroad there is not of your seeking, but of his own bringing, unsought. The first serious thought you entertained he inspired, and dictated the first prayer he uttered. Could he have done more or could you have deserved less? And what does he now deserve of you, but a life of grateful purity and devotedness, immovable and unquenchable for ever?

At the same time it is worthy of your observation that the blessed Spirit has wrought this change in you in *a method adapted, not to contradict, but to confirm, all your views of primary duty and guilt.*—What he has done may be summed up in this brief description;—*he has led you to consideration*, and by the consideration of divine things has transformed your heart. You are conscious that similar consideration of these things would, at any time, have had the same effect; so that whatever doubt you

may have affected respecting it before, you have convincing evidence now, that the means of repentance and salvation were in your own hands, and that your state of impenitence was one of entire wilfulness and deep criminality. Ah! why did you neglect these heart-subduing truths so long? With what bitterness and shame have you now to look back on that guilty period; and how powerfully should the recollection of it animate you, while you endeavour to live henceforth to him that loved you, and gave himself for you!

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